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Negotiating the Shop Floor: Employee and Union Loyalties in

British and American Retail, 1939-1970

By Joy Cushman

A Thesis Submitted to

The Faculty of Social Sciences

In Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Economic and Social History

Submitted February 2004

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For my late grandparents,
Ruth and Dana Cushman

Abstract

In the last two decades historians have developed theories and case studies of 'identity' in efforts to explain the ways in which individuals have negotiated their place in and relation to society at different periods in many different cultures. However, little historical attention has yet been paid to 'loyalty' as a distinct sociological concept or as a process of negotiation highly interrelated with identity formation. The overall aim of this thesis, then, is to set out a model of loyalty that can further explain the negotiation of relationships between individuals and institutions, while highlighting the investment institutional leaders have had in securing identification with and loyalty to their organisational and ideological agendas. The major tenet of this model is that there are important distinctions to be made between *fundamental*, *functional*, and *ideological loyalties*, the purposes these loyalties could serve, and the different interpersonal techniques necessary for the solicitation and maintenance of each of these loyalties.

The underlying premise of this model is that loyalties were always historically specific and must therefore be studied with continual reference to the specific historical contexts in which they were solicited, constructed, negotiated and maintained. Consequently, this study focuses on trade union and employee loyalties in the department and variety store trades of America and Britain between 1939 and 1970. The historical analysis of shop work and retail industrial relations in the post-war period is extremely limited to date. In turn, this study of loyalties in the retail trades has required analysis of some of the major developments in managerial style, labour market dynamics, trade union recruitment, and business and labour politics in British and American retail from the 1940s through the '60s. The emphasis throughout is on explaining how these developments affected the importance of shopworkers' loyalties to employers and unions, the ways in which those loyalties were solicited, and the success with which employers' and unions' efforts were met.

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colleague in the study of retail history. Thanks also to the archivists and librarians at the Hagley Museum and Library, the Chicago Historical Society, the Chicago Public Library, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, the Harvard University Baker Library, the New York Public Library, the British Library, the National Library of Scotland, the Mitchell Library, the Glasgow City Archives, and the University of Glasgow archives.

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Abbreviations

ABC	Active Ballot Club (RCIA)
AFL	American Federation of Labor
ACW	Amalgamated Clothing Workers (USA)
AUCE	Amalgamated Union of Co-operative Employees (UK)
BNRDGA	<i>Bulletin of the National Retail Dry Goods Association</i>
BSEIU	Building Service Employees International Union (USA)
CA	Co-operative Archive, Manchester, UK
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations (USA)
CN	<i>Co-operative News</i> (Scottish Edition)
CR	<i>Co-operative Review</i>
DCT	Drapers Chamber of Trade (UK)
DPOWA	Distributive, Processing and Office Workers of America (USA)
DR	<i>Drapers' Record</i>
DSE	<i>Department Store Economist</i>
FG	<i>Field Glass</i> (Marshall Field's)
FLSA	Fair Labor Standards Act (USA)
GJLP	<i>Gazette of the John Lewis Partnership</i>
HCA	Harrods Company Archive, London, UK
HG	<i>Harroddian Gazette</i> (Harrods)
HML	Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware, USA
HUBL	Harvard University Baker Library, Boston, Massachusetts, USA
JCPA	JC Penney Company Archive, Plano, Texas, USA
JIC	Joint Industrial Council (UK)
JLPA	John Lewis Partnership Archive, Stevenage, UK
JR	<i>Journal of Retailing</i>
L1401AN	<i>Local 1401 Association Newsletter</i> (RCIA Local 1401, Wisconsin)
L1-SN	<i>Local 1-S News</i> (Macy's Local 1-S)
M&SA	Marks & Spencers Company Archive, London, UK
MFA	Marshall Field & Company Archive, Chicago, Illinois, USA
MWC	Montgomery Ward's Collection, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois, USA
ND	<i>New Dawn</i> (USDAAW)

NLRB	National Labor Relations Board (USA)
NRDGA	National Retail Dry Goods Association (USA)
NRMA	National Retail Merchants Association (USA)
NUDAW	National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers (UK)
NUSA W&C	National Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks (UK)
NWLB	National War Labor Board (USA)
PAC	Political Action Committee (USA)
PD	<i>Pay Day</i> (JC Penney Company)
PN	<i>Penney News</i> (JC Penney Company)
RCA	<i>Retail Clerks Advocate, Retail Clerks International Advocate</i> (RCIA)
RCIA	Retail Clerks International Association (USA)
RWE	<i>Retail, Wholesale Employee</i> (RWDSU)
RWDSE	<i>Retail, Wholesale, Department Store Employee</i> (RWDSU)
RWDSU	Retail, Wholesale, Department Store Union (USA)
SC	<i>Store Chat</i> (Strawbridge & Clothier)
SHSW	State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, USA
SMN	<i>St Michael News</i> (Marks & Spencer)
TGWU	Transport and General Workers Union (UK)
TUC	Trades Union Congress (UK)
UGA	University of Glasgow Archive, Glasgow, UK
USDAW	Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (UK)

Introduction

I

During the Second World War the Chicago properties of the American mail order house and chain store giant Montgomery Ward were the site of unprecedented involvement by the American government in retail labour relations. In 1942 the National Labour Relations Board held an election in the company's Chicago retail stores, which granted the Chicago local of the United Retail, Wholesale, Department Store Employees of America (URWDSEA, CIO) the right to represent employee members in collective bargaining agreements. However, the company's director, Sewell Avery, refused to bargain with the union, even after a National War Labor Board (NWLB) decision directed him to do so, for fear that a maintenance of membership clause would eventually evolve into a closed shop provision. In a nationally-circulated advertisement published in dozens of local and national newspapers, Avery swore that he would bargain with the union only on direct orders from Congress or President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Roosevelt duly ordered the company to bargain in good faith, and Avery complied. However, when the one-year contract came up for renewal in 1943, Avery and his colleagues again questioned the union's right to represent their retail and warehouse employees. In a series of hostile exchanges between the union and the company, each side accused the other of un-American tyrannical behaviour. The union eventually called its Chicago members out on strike in April 1944, violating the war-time no-strike agreement between the trade unions and the government. After Roosevelt requested that the union call off the strike and that the company follow NWLB orders, the union complied, but the company still refused to negotiate. In an effort to save the NWLB from an untimely demise, Roosevelt ordered the eviction of Avery from company headquarters in April 1944 and in December of the same year ordered seizure by the Army of Wards' plants, warehouses and stores in Chicago and many other cities across the nation. The Army implemented the NWLB orders and maintained operation of the company until the end of the war when control was returned to Avery and the other Wards directors. By that time, however, the union no longer had the

financial reserves and support necessary to bargain with the company and lost all gains made during the three-year battle.¹ (See Figures I.1 and I.2.)

II

In February 1949, John Spedan Lewis, founder and Chairman of Britain's John Lewis Partnership stores, learned that a member of the Partnership's decision-making Central Council had Communist affiliations. As it happened, the accused member had been elected by employees and had campaigned for higher wages for the lowest-paid Partners. Shortly after his discovery, Lewis wrote a secret memorandum urging an unelected, nominated member of the Central Council to sponsor a resolution barring all Communists from Partnership employment. The latter Council member was C. N. Thornton-Kemsley, Director of Public Relations for the Partnership, and a Conservative Member of Parliament. At a meeting of the Central Council on 25 April 1949, Thornton-Kemsley initiated a heated debate on the issue of politics in the Partnership. Following the debate, on secret ballot the Council passed a resolution, 'That all present Partners and all future applicants for membership of the Partnership be required to sign a declaration that they are neither members of the Communist Party, nor in sympathy with the doctrines of that Party.' The resolution further stipulated that those who refused to sign the declaration would be dismissed. A second resolution on the same day to extend the ban to include Fascists was defeated, in part because of the assumed difficulty of identifying Fascists, and in part because of fears that such a ban might undermine Partnership morale by fostering a culture of intimidation and paranoia.²

The Central Council resolutions sparked heated debate, both within and outwith the Partnership. Many of the devolved Branch Councils in the Partnership's department stores across Britain passed resolutions on the subject. Over the course of 1949, the Partnership *Gazette's* letters to the editor pages were

¹ Boxes 10 and 12, MWC. The rhetoric of un-Americanism is most clearly documented in articles from the union's national publication: 'Ward Files \$1,000,000 Suit to Muzzle Union,' *RWDSE* 6 (1 December 1943), 2, 10, 12; Samuel Wolchok, 'Is Property More Sacred Than National Welfare?' *RWDSE* 7 (3 May 1944), 4; 'Testimony of President Wolchok Before Congressional Committee,' *RWDSE* 7 (1 July 1944), 5, 10, 12, 19.

² Council Proceedings, *GJLP* 31 (7 May 1949), 161-163. On the functions played by the Central Council and other Partnership institutions, see John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership for All* (London: Kerr-Cross, 1948); John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares* (London: Staples Press, 1954); Allan Flanders, Ruth Pomeranz, Joan Woodward, *Experiment in Industrial Democracy: A Study of the John Lewis Partnership* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968).

Figure I.1.



Sewell Avery being evicted by the US Army.

Oregonian (28 April 1944)

Box 10, Montgomery Ward Collection
Chicago Historical Society

Figure I.2



Avery became a symbol of American independence to many conservatives for standing up to Roosevelt.

Oregonian (2 May 1944)

Box 10, Montgomery Ward Collection
Chicago Historical Society

filled with correspondence from Partners arguing both sides of the issue. On 3 May and 20 May the House of Commons debated the case, with particular concern for freedom of expression and whether or not unemployment benefit should apply to those dismissed from the Partnership for assumed Communist association. Thornton-Kemsley took part in the Parliamentary debates, which weighed the nature and importance of retail employment against the measures being taken by the Partnership's chief executive and Central Council. To the point, one MP inquired of Minister of Labour, George Isaacs, 'Do you consider the security problem involved in the sale of ladies' underwear sufficiently important to warrant this intolerable and deplorable intrusion in the private lives of their employees?'³ The trade unions did not pass up the opportunity to use the very public debacle to their advantage; for example, the Marylebone Trades Council promptly published a recruitment leaflet promising Partners protection from undue interference in their private lives if they joined the appropriate union. The national press were the Partnership's greatest critics with a number of articles and letters through the spring and summer of 1949 questioning the legality of the notorious resolution.⁴

For months John Spedan Lewis publicly and adamantly refused to back down. For years afterwards he defended the Partnership's resolution by noting comparable anti-Communist initiatives by the Labour government and the trade unions at the time, particularly the Transport and General Workers Union.⁵ However, by the autumn of 1949 the issue had faded from the national press, largely because the political tests were never initiated, and no Partner was ever dismissed on the basis of the controversial Central Council resolution.

³ Quoted in 'Is the Red Miss X From the Undies Counter A Menace to Society?' *Daily Mirror* (4 May 1949), and in *The Times* of the same date, Folders 297/a, JLPA.

⁴ For samples of Branch Council debates, see the minutes for 18 March 1949, 'Cavendish Council Proceedings, 1946-1956,' Call No. 545/a; and 'Branch Councils and Communism,' *GJLP* 31 (16 April 1949), 127-129. Both private and public debates at the highest levels of the Partnership regarding the legality and desirability of the resolution can be found in the 'Founders Memoranda' boxes over the course of 1949, and in Folder 2478/c, many of which were also published in the *Gazette*. Frequent letters to the editor can be found on the subject in the *Gazette* through the spring and summer of 1949. House of Commons debates can be found in *Parliamentary Debates: House of Commons Official Report* 465 (20 May 1949), 842-855; 464 (3 May 1949), 802-803. A sample of the Marylebone Trades Council leaflet can be found under the title 'To Be or Not to Be' in Folder 2478/c. And a large number of press cuttings on the subject can be found in Folders 297/a. All held in JLPA.

⁵ 'Freedom of Association,' *GJLP* 33 (1 Sept. 1951), 377. Jim Phillips, 'Labour and the Cold War: The TGWU and the Politics of Anti-Communism, 1945-55,' *Labour History Review* 64 (Spring 1999).

Nevertheless, the summer of 1949 had been a watershed for the Partnership's principles and politics, exposing both the strength and limitations of democracy in the company's unique framework of industrial relations.

* * *

The war-time spectacle at Montgomery Wards and the 1949 events at the John Lewis Partnership were crucibles of conflicting loyalties for the shopworkers involved. They brought to light the complex intersection of institutional loyalties to employer, union and nation that otherwise constituted a more subtle backdrop to everyday working life for British and American shopworkers in the mid-twentieth century. Three major aims underlie my analysis of such loyalties. The first is to set forward a working model for understanding the complexities of loyalty as a historical phenomenon. The second is to document and analyse the ways shopworkers' institutional loyalties to employer, union and nation or national ideologies were solicited, constructed, and negotiated over time. The final aim is to provide a broad and comparative overview of the major issues affecting dry goods retailers and shopworkers' unions in both Britain and America from the 1940s to the 1960s.

Why loyalty?

In the past two decades historians have come to accept 'identity' as a key explanatory concept for understanding the ways individuals have negotiated their relationships to society in different historical periods and cultures. One of the distinct advantages of this approach is that most historians have come to understand identity as a *process*, rather than a static, self-evident reality.⁶ Largely

⁶ Gender has most often been the subject of identity studies, and the following are good examples: Susan Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the Modern Man* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999); Susan Kingsley Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain, 1640-1990* (London: Routledge, 1999). The key text on sexuality, selfhood and identity is Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, volume I (New York: Vintage Books, 1990; Trans. Robert Hurley). Race has also been the subject of historical identity studies; for example, Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). On class, see David Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (London: Penguin Books 2000). Many studies have come from examining the intersection of various identities. For example, Peter Alexander and Rick Halpern (Eds.), *Racializing Class, Classifying Race: Labour and Difference in Britain, the USA and Africa* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); Venus Green, 'Race, Gender, and National Identity in the American and British Telephone Industries,' *International Review of Social History* 46 (2001) 185-205; Nickie Charles and Felicia Hughes-Freeland (Eds.), *Practising Feminism: Identity, Difference and Power* (London: Routledge, 1996); and Alan Kidd and David Nicholls (Eds.), *Gender Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

missing from the study of historical identities and processes of identification, however, has been examination of loyalty as a distinct sociological concept. This is important because the construction and negotiation of loyalties and identities have often been interdependent and mutually definitive processes. After all, shared identification with a social group has often reaffirmed, reinforced, or even initiated new loyalties among group members. For example, the third-wave feminist movement of the late twentieth century was arguably at its strongest when women of different socio-economic classes, races, ethnicities and nationalities built up loyalties to feminism and shared goals on the basis of their common identity as women.⁷

Leaders of social and political groups throughout history have often been keenly aware of the powerful intersection of loyalty and identity, and have therefore appealed to personal identity to build in-group loyalties. The rise of identity politics on the left in post-war America was in part a result of left-wing politicians, from John F. Kennedy onwards, building platforms on the basis of gendered, racial, ethnic, class and other identities in order to mobilise voter loyalty. These new, or newly reinforced loyalties helped to compensate for the deteriorating appeal of the Democratic Party's New Deal State agenda as it faced the onslaught of aggressive business activism in the latter half of the twentieth century.⁸ But, as Naomi Klein and Lizabeth Cohen have argued, corporate marketers have been the ones to master most diligently and successfully the art of interweaving identity and loyalty—namely brand loyalty—to their own advantage.⁹

While historians, sociologists and political commentators have sometimes examined the formation of identity and loyalty as interrelated processes, there is room for more thorough investigation into loyalty as a distinct concept. The study of identity has been methodically parsed out into studies of gender, sexual, racial,

⁷ On the diversity of third-wave feminists and feminist strategies, see Nancy A. Naples (Ed.), *Community Activism and Feminist Politics: Organizing Across Race, Class and Gender* (New York: Routledge 1998). Leslie Heywood, Jennifer Drake (Eds.), *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1997).

⁸ On the decline of the New Deal and its implications for the Democrats, see Jonathan Reider, 'The Rise of the "Silent Majority",' in Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Eds.), *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1989), 243-268. On the growth of identity politics, see Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 330-344.

⁹ Naomi Klein, *No Logo* (London: Flamingo, 2000). Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*, 292-344.

ethnic, national, class and other identities. However, there is not yet a historical model of loyalty sufficiently nuanced to explain why certain groups at certain times have succeeded in soliciting and maintaining member loyalty while others have failed. Thus, the first aim of this thesis is to set out a working model of loyalty that might be adapted to serve various historical debates about interpersonal dynamics in a whole range of organisations and institutions: workplaces, unions, churches, political parties, activist groups, and so on.

A Model of Loyalty

Loyalty is not itself a singular concept. It should be self-evident that a loyalty between two individuals and a loyalty between an individual and an institution (such as a trade union) would be expressed differently, would be negotiated differently, and would serve different purposes. Likewise, loyalty to a perceivable object, such as a family or place of employment is intrinsically distinct from loyalty to an intangible idea, such as 'tradition', 'capitalism', or religion. For that reason, I have differentiated three major categories of loyalty to guide the present analysis: *fundamental*, *functional*, and *ideological loyalties*.

Fundamental loyalties are loyalties to an individual or group of individuals, expressed by perceivable ties and voluntary self-identification with another individual or a social group. Crucial to these loyalties is a willingness to abide by the basic spoken and unspoken rules of conduct that allow for sustained belonging to that social group. For example, at the most basic level, a shopworker could be said to be *fundamentally loyal* to a union so long as she remained a dues-paying member of that union.

Functional loyalties are loyalties to the basic goals of an individual or group of individuals. These loyalties are more difficult to measure, but could be expressed through an individual's active and willing contribution to the fulfilment of shared goals. So, a shopworker could be understood to be *functionally loyal* to his employer if he actively and willingly tried to sell additional goods to customers who entered his department in order to help his employer fulfil a stated goal to increase sales.

Finally, *ideological loyalties* are loyalties to the transcendent values and worldviews that define how a social group explains the political, social and economic dynamics of their society and their place in that society. These are the

most difficult loyalties to measure, but can be perceived when group members employ the ideological rhetoric set forward by that group's leaders in order to define their place in relation to society, in order to affirm or criticise the stated goals of the group, or in order to exact change within their organisation. For example, an employee of the British Co-operative retail societies could be said to be *ideologically loyal* if she used the language of co-operation to argue for more democratic power-sharing between employees and consumer/owners.

The interrelatedness of *fundamental*, *functional* and *ideological loyalties* is complex. On the one hand, each of these loyalties could be distinct from the others. *Fundamental loyalties* to employer or union could, and often did exist to the exclusion of *functional* and *ideological loyalties*. Similarly, a retail employee could work diligently to help fulfil her employer's stated business goals and demonstrate *functional loyalty* without actively expressing *ideological loyalty* to the social or political theories that her employer used to explain the role of business and workers in the political economy. Alternatively, an employee could be loyal to a worldview similar to that of his employer or union without necessarily translating that into an active contribution toward the fulfilment of either group's goals.

On the other hand, different loyalties were often deeply interdependent. For example, it was essential for employers and unions to secure *fundamental loyalties* from employees or members in order to provide the institutional stability necessary to cultivate *functional* and *ideological loyalties*. In the case of shopworkers, these three different types of loyalties were made more interdependent by the chronic instability and conditionality of each form of loyalty in a context of high labour turnover, which is discussed further in Chapter One. As this study of shopworkers' loyalties will demonstrate, loyalties were never static or secure; they were instead constantly open to renegotiation and contestation by rival institutional and interpersonal loyalties.

A difficulty inherent to the formulation of a historical framework for understanding the solicitation, construction and negotiation of loyalties is that loyalty can never be directly observed or measured. Given that inner motivations—unless explicitly stated—are usually beyond the realm of what historians can know beyond conjecture, there can be no such thing as a 'pure' loyalty in historical study, in the sense that one would normally associate loyalty

with an inner feeling of devotion. Loyalties in historical perspective can only be measured through words and actions, making their documentation contingent on written, spoken, or photographically recorded evidence of individual behaviour or sentiment. For example, in this study I frequently measure *fundamental loyalty* in terms of continued voluntary membership of a social group or organisation. One might ask whether termination of membership necessarily indicated the end of an individual's loyalty or devotion to that group. Without evidence as to the nature of any future interaction between the individual and the organisation, the answer is beyond the reach of historical analysis. Similarly, one could ask whether the employee who happened to make the extra effort to sell more goods was necessarily demonstrating *functional loyalty* to his employer, particularly where factors of self-interest, such as commissions or job advancements were at stake. One can at least assume that that the employee's self-interest conveniently converged with his employer's attempts to solicit his *functional loyalty*. Furthermore, in the chapters that follow self-interest or instrumentalist mentalities will be shown to have been important instincts mobilised by stores and unions to bolster all three types of loyalty. Nevertheless, without explicit evidence as to a particular employee's motivations, one can never fully know why that employee strove to sell more goods. Thus, insofar as loyalty is understood as an inner emotion, the historical study of loyalty will always be limited by the inherent complications of using historical sources.

In order to fully understand the complexity of loyalty, both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' historical methods must be employed. Top-down methods include use of archival and published materials and public records to document the political, economic and social agendas of the institutions in question and to explain the role of member loyalty in furthering those agendas.¹⁰ For this study that has meant using staff magazines, union publications and retail trade journals to outline the basic agendas of retail store executives and managers, and shopworkers' union leaders. In turn, these sources help to explain the essential importance of retail employee or union member loyalty to the advancement of those institutions' agendas. 'Bottom-up' historical research methods based on a

¹⁰ A good summary of the benefits and challenges of using such sources can be found in Sean O'Connell and Dilwyn Porter, 'Cataloguing Mail Order's Archives,' *Business Archives: Sources and History* 80 (November 2000), 44-54.

range of materials, including written letters, oral histories, and thorough analysis of specific historical events can aid understanding of how individuals responded to institutional attempts to solicit their loyalty and secure their identification with certain goals or ideological worldviews.¹¹ In this study, such sources are used to estimate the extent to which shopworkers responded to employers' and unions' attempts to secure their loyalties.¹² The latter is, without doubt, the more difficult of the two tasks.

Where, then, does this model of loyalty fit into the existing literature on the interrelationship of loyalty and identity described above? The difference between identity and loyalty as it has just been defined could best be described as a difference of emphasis. Whereas studies of identity are often concerned with the ways individuals have come to identify themselves as 'working-class' or 'middle-class', as 'masculine' or 'feminine', as 'black' or 'white', as 'heterosexual' or 'homosexual', studies of loyalty can help to explain how different social or political groups have directly intervened in those basic processes of identification in order to build support for their agendas or worldviews. In other words, this model of loyalty is founded on the assumption that identity is a socially-defined process, but it continually seeks to situate that process of identification in a specific historical context of often localised interpersonal relations. It seeks to identify both the specific historical actors who affected personal processes of identity-formation and the stake those actors held in securing both loyalty to and identification with their agendas and ideological worldviews. Finally, in the study of loyalty, identity is taken as a broadly inclusive concept that moves beyond typical dichotomous categorisations to explain the ways basic sociological markers of selfhood such as class, gender and race have been overlaid with a multiplicity of local and historically-specific in-group and out-group identities.

¹¹ On using oral histories, see Robert Perks, Alistair Thomas (Eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998). Robert Perks, *Oral History: Talking About the Past* (London: Historical Association, 1995). Paul Richard Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000, 3rd Ed.). Trevor Lummis, *Listening to History: The Authenticity of Oral Evidence* (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble, 1988).

¹² Following the full completion of this study, transcripts of all oral histories interviews conducted in the course of this research will be deposited with the Scottish Oral History Archive, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. Other oral histories of department store employees can be found in the Harrods Company archive and the John Lewis Partnership archive.

The Case of British and American Shopworkers

Given the emphasis above on construction of loyalties as historically specific phenomena, this study focuses specifically on British and American shopworkers in department and variety stores from 1939 to 1970. But, while the group of workers covered by this study is specific in some ways, it is important to acknowledge that the outer boundaries defining that group were always a bit blurry. Although the populations of retail union leaders and retail executives remained fairly stable over the course of the mid-twentieth century, the population of shopworkers was fluid and highly changeable. This was in part a result of high labour turnover rates, discussed further in Chapter One. However, processes of market consolidation, branch expansion, and transformation in structures of management and finance also meant that an individual company could change categories over time. (Various definitions of the major retail categories with which this study is concerned are listed in the Appendix.) As American retail business experts Lawrence Robinson and Eleanor May argued in 1956, a definitive characteristic of the American retail trade in the mid-twentieth century was the convergence of department and variety store styles as both sought to improve their base of affluent middle-class customers.¹³ Similar conclusions could be made about specific stores in Britain. For example, Marks & Spencer's conscientiously cultivated over time a more refined company image to attract better-off customers as Woolworth's came to dominate the variety store trade.¹⁴ In effect, a shop assistant working for JC Penney's in the US or Marks & Spencer's in Britain in the early twentieth century would easily have fallen into the variety store category of shopworkers; another shop assistant working in either of those companies in the late twentieth century might be said to have been working for a 'junior department store' with more up-scale merchandise, more clearly defined departments, and a higher degree of service. Regardless of where they stood within the variety or department store trades, the subjects of this study can be delimited by acknowledging what they were not: grocery or supermarket workers, or employees of specialist shops.

¹³ Lawrence R. Robinson and Eleanor G. May, *Self Service in Variety Stores* (Boston: Harvard Univ. Graduate School of Business Admin., 1956), 3-4.

¹⁴ Judi Bevan, *The Rise and Fall of Marks & Spencer* (London: Profile, 2002, 2nd Ed.), 23-42.

The study of employee and union loyalties in the British and American department and variety store trades is inherently situated in the historical literature on industrial relations. The subject of loyalty—in its undifferentiated form—has most often surfaced within this literature when historians have sought to explain the various reasons and ways that employers have solicited employee loyalties. Stuart Brandes and other labour historians have argued that the main purpose served by employee loyalties in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries was the attainment of a docile, politically-neutral community of workers averse to unionisation.¹⁵ Without dismissing the validity of this argument, even for the retail trades where unionisation was characteristically low, it must be acknowledged that the construction of employee loyalties was never a one-sided phenomenon where employers offered just as many perks as necessary to build up a reserve of employee loyalty against real or potential threats of unionisation. Gerald Zahavi has most explicitly acknowledged the complexities of loyalty formation in the workplace in his study of employee loyalties at the Endicott Johnson company in inter-war America. He has argued that loyalty formation was in fact a process of negotiation between employers and employees in which employees exerted a hitherto unacknowledged degree of agency.¹⁶ The emphasis on loyalty in this study will demonstrate that both stores and unions in the mid-twentieth century were similarly vulnerable to the exercise of agency on the part of shopworkers. There has been much less explicit historical discussion of loyalty with regard to trade unions, except where historians have been concerned to explain why various unions faced difficulty recruiting loyalty from women and from workers of racial or ethnic minority groups. The second major aim of this thesis then, is to use the department and variety store trades in Britain and America at mid-century as a case study in order to consider in more detail the many reasons retail business and union executives sought *fundamental*, *functional* and *ideological* loyalties from shopworkers, the multiple methods they employed to solicit those loyalties, and where possible the reasons why they succeeded or failed in soliciting certain forms of loyalty at certain times.

¹⁵ Stuart D. Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism, 1880-1940* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

¹⁶ Gerald Zahavi, 'Negotiated Loyalty: Welfare Capitalism and the Shoeworkers of Endicott Johnson, 1920-1940,' *Journal of American History* 70 (Dec. 1983), 602-620.

The layout of the thesis reflects that second major aim. There are two sections with three chapters each. The first section focuses on employee relations in department and variety stores, and *fundamental*, *functional* and *ideological* employee loyalties in those stores. Chapter One outlines the major challenges British and American department and variety store retailers faced with regard to labour turnover, workplace productivity, trading conditions, consumer relations, and political agendas and analyses the importance of employee loyalties for resolving each of these challenges. Chapter Two documents retail executives' and managers' attempts to cultivate employee loyalties through long-established patterns of paternalism, examining the limitations of rhetorical as compared to practical paternalism with regard to sustaining various forms of employee loyalties. Chapter Three follows the shift toward 'new' managerial styles in retail, including professionalisation and human relations following the Second World War, and surveys the extent to which these styles delivered the employee loyalties on which department and variety store businesses depended.

The second section of the thesis focuses on union member relations and *fundamental*, *functional* and *ideological* loyalties to retail unions. At first glance, the justification for the significant attention devoted to the shopworkers' unions in this thesis might be unclear, given the notoriously low union membership rates in the retail trades and the dry goods trades in particular. However, as this section will demonstrate, unorganised shopworkers were not untouched by the recruitment efforts and political activities of retail unions. Furthermore, the difficulties the unions faced with soliciting and maintaining member loyalties sheds light on some significant problems in the British and American labour movements with regard to service sector employees. Finally, this section will show that unions drew on many of the same techniques as employers to solicit the loyalties of shopworkers. The first chapter in this section, Chapter Four, is comparable to Chapter One in that it delineates the major challenges shopworkers' unions faced at the bargaining table and in national politics. It also explains the importance of member loyalty for resolving these challenges and for advancing the unions' social, economic and political agendas. Chapter Five analyses the attempts made by the major shopworkers' unions to secure *fundamental*, *functional* and *ideological loyalties* from both extant and potential members through professionalisation, instrumentalism and organised social, educational

and political activities. Chapter Six offers several explanations for the retail unions' successes and failures with regard to member loyalty in general and in the department and variety store trades particularly in the decades following the Second World War.

As emphasised in the model of loyalty set out above, loyalty cannot be studied entirely independently of identity. Every chapter in this study will elaborate on the ways that shopworkers' class and gender identities affected stores and unions' reasons for and methods of soliciting loyalty, and in turn how those identities were alternatively challenged and reinforced by store and union executives' efforts to sustain shopworkers' loyalties. Racial identities were also important, since various departments in many American and British stores were either directly or indirectly segregated by race, a topic explored most explicitly in Chapters Four and Six.¹⁷ The success of store executives' and union leaders' efforts to capture shopworkers' loyalties depended to a large extent on the degree to which those institutions' local and national agendas cohered with workers' class, gender and racial identities and family roles.

Historiographical Contributions

The initial decision to focus on shopworkers in this study stemmed from my interest in the historiographies of post-war British and American labour and consumerism. Shop work seemed the logical focus, given that it was—and perhaps always will be—at the interface between production and consumption. I soon came to discover, however, that there has been very little written of post-war shopworkers from a historical perspective, and that in order to write about loyalty in this trade I would simultaneously have to explain some of the broader trends in post-war retail business and union history. This, therefore, constitutes the third major aim of this study. In order to begin to fulfil that aim, I have drawn on three major strands of historiographical study: the history of retail business and of the retail store as a site of social and cultural significance; the history of the rise and decline of British and American labour movements between the 1930s and the

¹⁷ Charles R. Perry, *The Negro in the Department Store Industry* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Penn. Press, 1971). Gordon F. Bloom, F. Marion Fletcher, Charles R. Perry, *Negro Employment in Retail Trade: A Study of Racial Policies in the Department Store, Drugstore, and Supermarket Industries* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Penn. Press, 1972).

1980s; and the analysis of consumer politics in the political economies of twentieth-century Britain and America.

The history of retail business covers an amazing chronological breadth from market stalls and shopping galleries in early modern Britain and colonial America to internet trading in the twenty-first century.¹⁸ Within this broad historiography, the study of department stores as unique retail endeavours is particularly noteworthy. The rise of the grand emporium in mid-nineteenth century Britain, America and Europe has been the focus of many economic, cultural, social, architectural, political, business and labour histories. A common theme in these studies is that the rise of department stores both reflected and contributed to the transformation of the urban landscape, class structures, gender roles, shopping and consumer habits, retail labour relations, and the relationship between business and the state.¹⁹ Aside from company histories, much less has been written of variety, discount and dry goods multiples as distinct forms of retailing. However, as Gareth Shaw has pointed out, the evolution of these stores had much in common with the evolution of department stores, particularly in the late nineteenth century.²⁰ With origins in the nineteenth century, chain variety stores arguably became the twentieth-century equivalent of the department store in the 'retail revolution', insofar as variety stores also dramatically transformed

¹⁸ For an introduction to the retail historiography, see John Benson and Laura Ugolini (Eds.), *A Nation of Shopkeepers* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), esp. 1-24. The key text on developments in British retailing is James B. Jefferys, *Retail Trading in Britain, 1850-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1954).

¹⁹ One of the first of such studies was Alison Adburgham's *Shops and Shopping, 1800-1914: Where, and in What Manner the Well-Dressed English Woman Bought her Clothes* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1964). Some of the major studies of department stores are: Bill Lancaster, *The Department Store: A Social History* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995). William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993). Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986). Geoffrey Crossick and Serge Jaumain (Eds.), *Cathedrals of Consumption: The European Department Store, 1850-1939* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999). Michael B. Miller, *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981). Elaine S. Abelson, *When Ladies Go A-Thieving: Middle-Class Shoplifters in the Victorian Department Store* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). Erika Diane Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). There are also a multitude of company histories of department stores, of which the following form a small sample: Lloyd Wendt and Herman Kogan, *Give the Lady What She Wants! The Story of Marshall Field & Company* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1952). Ralph M. Hower, *History of Macy's of New York, 1858-1919: Chapters in the Evolution of a Department Store* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1943). Michael Moss and Alison Turton, *A Legend of Retailing: House of Fraser* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989).

retail business practice, labour relations, consumption, class dynamics, and the urban, suburban and rural landscape in both Britain and America, particularly during the inter-war and post-Second-World-War years.²¹

Given that grocery and single-product dry goods stores (such as car dealerships and shoe stores) and their employees often faced challenges unique to their trade, this study focuses only on the department store businesses that have most commonly been the subjected to historical analysis, with comparative extension to variety stores. Allowing for the new inclusion of the major multiples, the contribution to be made in the field of retail history then, is generally less one of subject than period. With the notable exception of Sanford Jacoby's analysis of Sears labour relations in the mid-twentieth century, very little has been written on the British and American dry goods trade or retail politics in the post-Second-World years from a historical perspective.²² Consequently, one of the major aims of this thesis has been to identify the key issues affecting department and variety stores following the Second World War. These issues broadly included changing labour and consumer market conditions, changes in corporate structures, simultaneous business consolidation and branch expansion, and change and continuity in retail managerial styles and political agendas. With regard to retail labour relations specifically, the studies most important to this thesis are those by Susan Porter Benson, Christopher Hosgood and Bill Lancaster, who have all analysed the nature of American and British department store employment in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.²³ The first

²⁰ Gareth Shaw, 'The Evolution and Impact of Large-Scale Retailing in Britain,' in John Benson and Gareth Shaw (Eds.), *The Evolution of Retail Systems, c. 1800-1914* (Leicester: Leicester Univ. Press, 1992), 135-165.

²¹ Some important exceptions to this generalisation are: Sanford Jacoby, *Modern Manors: Welfare Capitalism Since the New Deal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 95-142; and Andrew Alexander, Gareth Shaw and Deborah Hodson, 'Regional Variations in the Development of Multiple Retailing in England, 1890-1939,' in Benson and Ugolini (Eds.), *Nation of Shopkeepers*, 127-154, esp. 143-149. Some company histories of these stores are: Karen Plunkett-Powell, *Remembering Woolworth's: A Nostalgic History of the World's Most Famous Five-and-Dime* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2001). Boris Emmet and John E. Jeuck, *Catalogues and Counters: A History of Sears, Roebuck and Company* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950). Frank B. Latham, *1872-1972: A Century of Serving Consumers: The Story of Montgomery Ward* (Chicago: Montgomery Ward, 1972). Bevan, *Rise and Fall of Marks & Spencer*.

²² Jacoby, *Modern Manors*, 95-142.

²³ Benson, *Counter Cultures*. Lancaster, *The Department Store*, 125-158. Christopher Hosgood, "'Mercantile Monasteries': Shops, Shop Assistants, and Shop Life in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain,' *Journal of British Studies* 38 (July 1999), 322-352.

section of the thesis will most clearly address the historiography of retail business and the place of shopworkers in that history.

The second major historiographical strand with which this study is concerned is that regarding the rise and decline of British and American trade unions over the course of the twentieth century. Many explanations have been given for the decline of trade unionism in the post-war period, including failure to organise women and ethnic minorities; the decline of highly-unionised heavy industries and rise of service sector employment; the increased geographic mobility of manufacturing; Cold War anti-Communism; political compromise with the Labour and Democratic Parties; and the final blow dealt the unions by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan in the 1980s.²⁴ The major retail unions in Britain and America were among the most populated and influential in their respective labour movements in the post-war years and therefore affected, and were affected by, these challenges to unionisation. The experiences of USDAW, the RCIA, and the RWDSU suggest that recruitment and maintenance of membership was indeed inhibited by the geographic mobility of retail businesses, by the dominance of women and part-time workers in the retail labour market, and by the Cold War. To this list can be added characteristics common to the retail trades that can help to explain sectoral differences in member recruitment. However, of greater importance will be an examination of the ideals and practices of democracy in the British and American shopworkers' unions which suggests that membership rates were most directly affected by successes and failures in union democracy—a subject that has received much less attention from labour historians.

Another key theme in the post-war labour historiography has been concerned with the nature of trade union politics. In America the debate has focused on the question, 'why is there no socialism in America?', first posed by Werner Sombart in 1906, and on the benefits and problems stemming from the

²⁴ For overviews of the growth and decline of British and American labour movements, see Patrick Renshaw, *American Labor and Consensus Capitalism, 1935-1990* (London: Macmillan, 1991). Kim Moody, *An Injury to All: The Decline of American Unionism* (New York: Verso, 1988). Michael Goldfield, *The Decline of Organized Labor in the United States* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987). Chris Wrigley (Ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations, 1939-1979* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1996). W. Hamish Fraser, *A History of British Trade Unionism, 1700-1998* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999). W. W. Knox, *Industrial Nation: Work, Culture and Society in Scotland, 1800-Present* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1999).

labour movement's close affiliation with the Democratic Party.²⁵ In Britain the debate has centred on the relationship between the trade unions and the Labour Party, asking whether militant trade unionism jeopardised the Labour Party at the polls, and whether compromise with the Party diluted socialist tendencies in the unions.²⁶ What can be agreed is that the British and American unions, of both conservative and liberal persuasions, shared the goal of achieving economic democracy, whether just in the workplace or in the nation as a whole. Chapters Four through Six are set against the backdrop of those political debates, examining the many ways union leaders imparted their political and ideological beliefs to rank and file members, while considering the importance of union democracy to the achievement of economic democracy.²⁷

The third significant area of historical research on which I have drawn is the literature on the politics of consumption. While it has long been recognised that consumption is political in the broadest sense of the term, the study of the politics of consumption has seen a dramatic renaissance in the past few years. From the politics of milk and bread to the consumer's place in post-war British and American political economies, the social and cultural histories of consumption written in the 1980s and '90s have been recently recontextualised with reference to broader political developments. On the American side, Lizabeth Cohen's recent publications have explored the evolution of the consumer as citizen from the 1930s through the '70s, documenting the consumer's influence on political processes, and the influence of the state in individual consumers' lives. On the British front, Matthew Hilton has analysed the politics of consumer activism in twentieth-century Britain as distinct from contemporaneous

²⁵ John H. M. Laslett and Seymour Martin Lipset (Eds.), *Failure of a Dream? Essays in the History of American Socialism* (London: Univ. of California Press, 1984, Revised Ed.). Eric Foner, 'Why is there no Socialism in the United States?' *History Workshop Journal* 17 (1984), 57-80. Nelson Lichtenstein, 'From Corporatism to Collective Bargaining: Organized Labor and the Eclipse of Social Democracy in the Postwar Era,' in Fraser and Gerstle (Eds.), *Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order*, 122-152.

²⁶ Jim Phillips, *The Great Alliance: Economic Recovery and the Problems of Power, 1945-1991* (London: Pluto Press, 1996). Patrick Maguire, 'Labour and the Law: The Politics of British Industrial Relations, 1945-1979,' in Wrigley, *History of British Industrial Relations*, 44-61. David Howell, "'Shut Your Gob!": Trade Unions and the Labour Party, 1945-64,' in Alan Campbell, Nina Fishman, John McIlroy (Eds.), *British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics: The Post-War Compromise, 1945-64* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 117-144. Ross McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain, 1880-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

²⁷ On broader American union attempts to impart political and ideological beliefs, see Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-60* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

developments in America and Europe. These two major studies have been supplemented by a range of more specific studies explaining everything from African Americans' consumer politics during the Civil Rights movement to heated debates about rationing and price controls during the Second World War and early post-war years.²⁸

Given that retail businesses and their employees were frequently either the intended or unintended targets of consumer activism, this study aims to explain the impact of consumer politics and the politics of consumption on those most frequently in contact with citizens as consumers. Alternatively, employers and shopworkers' unions were often key institutional forces in the evolution of consumer politics, as when employers lobbied for the end to price administration and rationing, or when the retail unions bargained for legal restrictions to Sunday trading and late-night store openings. One function of this study then, is to outline the political niche retail businesses and unions cut out for themselves vis-à-vis the consumer/citizen, and to explain the ways those institutions' discourses and activities intersected with post-war consumer politics in Britain and America. Another major goal with regard to the historiography of consumer politics is to identify the role defined for shopworkers within the political agendas favoured by retail stores and unions. For both institutions, shopworkers were the crucial link to the customer as citizen. These assertions will be more fully developed in Chapters One and Four. However, the political contexts of consumption in post-war Britain and America helped to mould retailers' and unions' political and ideological agendas, and therefore provide the backdrop for discussion of shopworkers' *ideological loyalties* which are discussed in all chapters of the thesis.

²⁸ For an introduction to the study of consumer politics, see Martin Daunton and Matthew Hilton (Eds.), *The Politics of Consumption: Material Culture and Citizenship in Europe and America*, (Oxford: Berg, 2001), especially the introduction, p. 1-32. For more on American consumer politics, see Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic*. Elizabeth Cohen, 'The New Deal State and the Making of Citizen Consumers,' in Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern and Matthias Jut (Eds.), *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), 111-25. For more on British consumer politics, see Matthew Hilton, *Consumerism in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Search for a Historical Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003). Matthew Hilton, 'The Fable of the Sheep, Or, Private Virtues, Public Vices: The Consumer Revolution of the Twentieth Century,' *Past & Present* 176 (August 2002), 222-256.

Caveats

The comparative approach to this study deserves explanation. Initially it was simply a product of my desire to identify some of the major similarities and differences between the British and American labour movements during the Cold War. Over time however, it has become clear that there are many other advantages to be gleaned from a comparative approach to this subject. To begin with, the evolution of the dry goods retail trades in two of the world's foremost consumer societies has long been mutually interdependent. The contemporaneous openings in 1909 of Gordon Selfridge's London department store with its American-style display techniques, and of American retailer Woolworth's first British store in Liverpool were a portent of things to come.²⁹

From Selfridges and Woolworths to the current Wal-Mart/Asda phase of discount retail development, American selling styles have been definitively influential in the British dry goods trades. But the exchange was hardly a one-way street. Following the Second World War, British and American department and variety store retailers frequently sent their Personnel Directors, buyers and executives to visit stores, talk with employees and generally experience the way of life of their counterparts across the Atlantic. American retailers praised the British retail education system and the quality of shop floor service, while British visitors to America's stores commented on new technologies and new processes of selling and, invariably, the size of American steaks.³⁰ The shopworkers' unions did the same. The British Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAAW) sent union administrators and members to visit their sister unions in the US—the Retail, Wholesale, Department Store Union (RWDSU) and the Retail Clerks International Association (RCIA)—and the American unions offered up similar exchanges. (See figure I.3.) Summaries of these visits in union magazines not only reported the working conditions and notable activities of their cross-Atlantic colleagues, but also commented on recruitment and bargaining strategy,

²⁹ On the importance of comparative retail history, see Benson and Ugolini, *Nation of Shopkeepers*, 12-14.

³⁰ E. B. Weiss, 'Why Not Import British Salespeople?' *Stores* 53 (July 1971), 32. 'Merchants in Britain,' *BNRDGA* 27 (Dec. 1945), 12. Stanley C. Hollander, 'Retail Training and Certification—The British Experiment and American Analogies,' *JR* 33 (Summer 1957), 69-78. O. B. Miller, 'Department Stores in American Retail Distribution,' *GJLP* 42 (2 July 1960), 515-516. 'American Journey,' *HG* 39 (Jan. 1954), 3-4. 'The American Scene,' *HG* 41 (Jan. 1956), 4-7. 'Personal Pars From Pontings,' *Kenbar* 1 (Aug. 1950), 18-20, HF51/5/5/5, UGA. On the Associated Merchandising Corporation's 1957 trip to Britain, see special issue of the *HG* 42 (May 1957).

Figure I.3. USDAW meets RCIA



J. Alan Birch, USDAW's General Secretary (left),
met RCIA President, James Suffridge (right),
at the World Congress of White Collar Workers in London in 1958.
Retail Clerks Advocate 61 (October 1958), 6-7.

publication styles, and political activity.³¹ The most formal of cross-Atlantic journeys in the retail trades in the mid-twentieth century was that made by the Anglo-American Council on Productivity Team, populated by British retailers and trade unionists, when they visited America in 1952 to discover new ways of improving the productivity of British retail.³²

It is difficult to determine whether parallel developments in department and variety store business and managerial strategy in Britain and America in the post-war years were the result of conscientious implementation of strategies observed during those cross-Atlantic exchanges, or simply the result of similar economic and political pressures. The answer may be some combination of both. It is doubtful the intercontinental visits would have occurred with such frequency if they had not been in some way productive. That said, there were also many uncontrollable factors, including labour market dynamics, the growth of affluence, and the distinct nature of retail production that may have led retailers and unions to similar ends in each country, independent of external influences. Whatever the cause, the point remains that American and British dry goods retailers and shopworkers' unions shared a great deal in common. The framework of this thesis tends to emphasise those commonalities and the shared experiences of British and American shopworkers.³³

Although I have primarily focused on explaining the deep similarities in Anglo-American retail business and union styles, I have also tried, where possible, to note the major differences. One of the significant differences that underlies the entire thesis is the distinct chronological gap between implementation of new retail managerial and selling strategies in America and in Britain owing in part to the austerity imposed by prolonged war-time rationing and delayed economic recovery in Britain.³⁴ Also, although there has not yet been

³¹ T. W. Cynog-Jones, 'How Trade Unionism Works for British Retail Clerks,' *Local I-S News* 10 (1 December 1959), 3, SHSW. 'N.U.D.A.W. Contacts the C.I.O.,' *ND* 25 (10 March 1945), 66. T. W. Cynog-Jones, 'America Re-Visited,' *ND*, each issue from 13 (22 Aug. 1959), 523-524, to 13 (14 Nov. 1959), 707-708, 719.

³² T. W. Cynog-Jones, 'American Journey,' *ND* each issue from 6 (11 October 1952) to 7 (17 January 1953). 'Retailing in America: Productivity Team Report,' *ND* 6 (22 November 1952), 739-741. '20 Questions—and Answers,' *HG* 38 (Feb. 1953), 44-45.

³³ On commonalities of retail practice between Britain, Canada and Germany in the 19th century, see Benson and Shaw, *Evolution of Retail Systems*.

³⁴ On the consumer gap between Britain and America, see Sue Bowden and Avner Offer, 'Household Appliances and the Use of Time: The United States and Britain Since the 1920s.' *Economic History Review* 47:4 (1994), 725-748.

a comprehensive comparative study of British and American consumer cultures in the post-WWII years, there is a growing body of literature on consumerism and consumer politics within each country, delineating the nationally-specific permutations and limitations of post-war affluence.³⁵ Naturally, the distinct character of consumerism in each country affected retailers' trading styles in different ways, but a deeper analysis of that element is beyond the scope of this study. However, of great importance to this study are the unique styles of nationalism and ideology emerging from business and labour circles in Britain relative to America, particularly at the height of the Cold War. These political agendas are examined in Chapters One and Four. More specific differences have been identified wherever possible. However, it must be said that it is the comparative study of historical similarities that will allow for further investigation of important differences in other studies.

A major qualification to be made at the outset is that discussion in this thesis of regional differences within Britain and within America have often been sacrificed to the larger distinctions between Britain and America, or between department store and variety store practice. This is made problematic by the fact that until the advent of the internet, retail was one of the most locally situated businesses in the modern world. With the significant exception of mail order transactions, consumers in the mid-twentieth century purchased their necessities and embellishments from shops or stores in their local communities. Where possible, I have noted distinctions between urban, suburban, and rural trading, employment and unionisation practices, but regional distinctions have tended to surface primarily with regard to differences between specific cities or trend-setting stores. The broad scope of this study prohibits more detailed analysis of regional difference. However, there is an expanding literature on regional variety in the retail trades in Britain, led by Andrew Alexander, Gareth Shaw and Deborah Hudson, promising more in this direction in the future.³⁶

³⁵ See footnote 28 above. For a comparative perspective on consumer society in the inter-war years, see Gary Cross, *Time and Money: The Making of Consumer Culture* (London: Routledge, 1993).] See also, Strasser, McGovern and Judt, *Getting and Spending*. John Benson, *The Rise of Consumer Society in Britain, 1880-1980* (London: Longman, 1994). Gary Cross, *An All Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in America* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2000). Lawrence B. Glickman (Ed.), *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader* (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1999).

³⁶ There is a growing literature on regional differences in retailing, including Alexander, Shaw and Hodson, 'Regional Variations in the Development of Multiple Retailing'.

The final important caveat to be made is that the John Lewis Partnership has perhaps come in for an undue share of criticism in the section on employee relations. It must be noted from the outset that it is nearly impossible to tell whether or not the Partnership's employee relations were significantly better or worse than at other stores, because of the general lack of comparative material. The reason that Partnership sources have been used most frequently to critique retail managerial styles is simply a consequence of the Partnership's unique in-house journalism, described in Chapter Three. The fact that the *John Lewis Partnership Gazette* not only allowed but encouraged the submission of anonymous letters from employees offers a unique and important set of source material for the retail labour historian. Whereas most available staff magazines and company archive materials documented the rosy side of shop life, the *Gazette* offered a more complete glimpse of life in a major British retail company by documenting debates about company structure, employee relations and political issues from the perspective of executives and employees at the time that these debates were occurring. This is an invaluable source, and it is a credit to John Spedan Lewis that he had the courage to implement this practice early on in the company's history, when most business executives sought to minimise open and public debate with employees. Consequently, except where criticisms of the Partnership have been made with specific reference to the Partnership's company structure or management, those criticisms must be considered to be possible signs of broader trends in the British and perhaps American retail trades.

* * *

In combination the three main aims of this thesis have resulted in a study that focuses in on a specific historical concept, while situating that concept in broader historical political, social and economic trends related to British and American retail business and trade unions in the mid-twentieth century. By taking loyalty as an entry-point for examination of relations between department and variety store employers and their employees on the one hand, and between retail unions and their members on the other, retail business and unions can be understood to have been organisations encompassing a multiplicity of locally-defined interpersonal relations *and* as institutions with national economic and political agendas. Indeed, the main argument of this thesis is that this study of *fundamental, functional* and *ideological loyalties* shows that the work of businesses and trade unions as

economic and political institutions depended heavily on the way in which those institutions functioned as organisations of individuals.

Employee Loyalties

Loyalty. . .

If you work for a man,

in heaven's name work for him!

If he pays you wages that supply your bread and butter,

work for him—

speak well of him—

stand by him—

and stand by the institution he represents.

--Elbert Hubbard, 'Get Out or Get in Line'

Reprinted in the *Harroldian Gazette* and *Store Chat*¹

¹ Cover, *HG* 5 (March 1917). 'Loyalty,' *SC* 51 (Nov. 1960), 16.

Chapter One

The Importance of Loyalty to Retail Employers

Employee loyalties have often been argued by British and American labour historians to have served primarily as a buffer to repel potential trade union organisation or to counter the propaganda power of trade unions in the political arena.² This was doubtlessly the case at Sears, Roebuck's chain of junior department stores in America, where the management actively solicited and measured employee loyalties from the 1930s onward for the main purpose of deterring unionisation.³ As evidenced by the standoff between Sewell Avery and President Roosevelt during the Second World War, anti-unionism was raw and explicit in the Montgomery Wards retail stores, despite and perhaps because of the fact that the company was one of the most heavily unionised in the American retail trades.⁴ (See Figure 1.1.)

Not all British and American department and variety store managements were as aggressively anti-union as Sears and Wards, however. In Britain, the majority of Co-operative retail societies made trade union membership compulsory upon employment in the 1930s, in part to make Co-operative labour relations more consistent with the supposed working-class ethos of the movement.⁵ The John Lewis Partnership filled the middle ground with what could best be described as an ambiguous, if not inconsistent approach to trade unionism. As Chairman of the Partnership, John Spedan Lewis, and O B Miller who followed him, approved of trade unions in principle but viewed with deep scepticism many trade union leaders with whom the Partnership's stores were

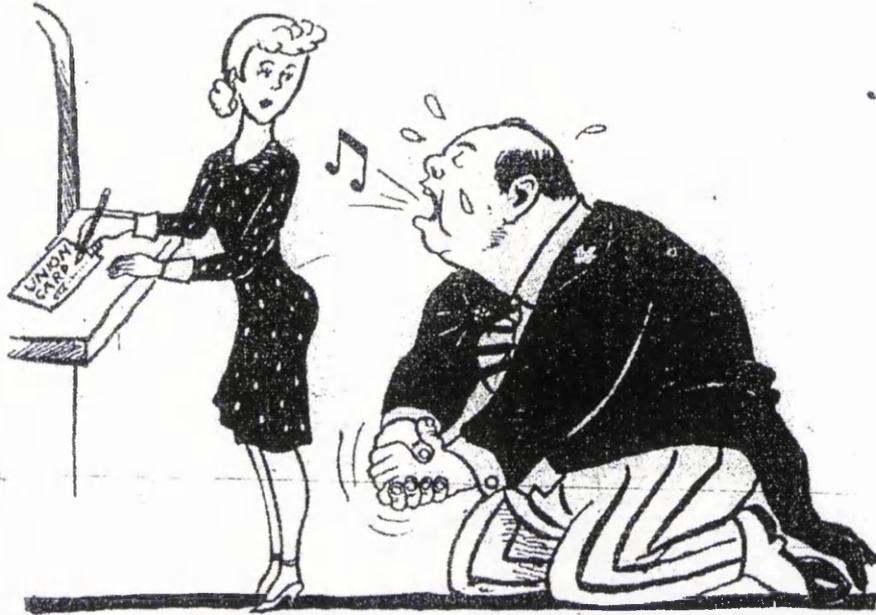
² On loyalty as anti-unionism, see Gerald Zahavi, *Workers, Managers, and Welfare Capitalism: The Shoeworkers and Tanners of Endicott Johnson, 1890-1950*. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), esp. 153-161. Stuart D. Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism, 1880-1940* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1970). On employee loyalty as part of a broader political battle between business and labour in post-war America, see Elizabeth A. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-60* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

³ Sanford M. Jacoby, *Modern Manors: Welfare Capitalism Since the New Deal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 95-142.

⁴ In 1958, Ward's Chairman James A. Barr estimated that 44 per cent of Ward's employees were union members. 'Key to Progress: Barr Outlines Growth—Urges Economic Statesmanship by Labor,' *For-ward* 3 (May 1958), 2.

⁵ A. M. Carr-Saunders, P. Sargent Florence, and Robert Peers, *Consumers' Co-operation in Great Britain: An Examination of the British Co-operative Movement* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938), 350-352. On competing working-class and middle-class definitions of Co-operation, see

Figure 1.1. Retail employee loyalties as anti-unionism



Bide with me, my melancholy slavey
To your boss be good, and true,
Though department stores may not be heaven
Don't despair or get to feeling blue.
We're just one great big and happy fam'ly
Swelling money bags for me
Shy away, my dear, from the union please keep clear
Or else I shall be melancholy, too.

The retail unions, and many labour historians, have commonly understood employer solicitation of employee loyalties primarily in terms of employer attempts to avert unionisation.

Retail, Wholesale, Department Store Employee 4 (30 April 1941), 8.

engaged.⁶ In America, there were a number of significant retail executives and retail experts, George Kirstein foremost among them, who argued a moderate approach to industrial relations in which the trade union had an accepted and potentially useful role to play.⁷ Relations with the trade unions were notably hostile in New York City department stores including Macy's and Oppenheim Collins by mid-century. However, union-management relations with Philadelphia's Retail Labor Standards Association and Snellenburg's, Lit Brothers, Frank and Seder's and Gimbel's department stores were generally peaceful, informal and mutually respectful.⁸ Clearly then, employee and union loyalties were not always or necessarily at odds in British and American dry goods retailing.

The historiographical focus on the managerial quest for employee loyalties as anti-unionism has, until recently, tended to obscure historical investigation into the multiple other purposes served by employee loyalties. As Andrea Tone has argued of American business in the Progressive era, paternalism and other managerial styles were always couched in a broader political context and always served purposes other than labour subjugation and union deterrence.⁹ In British and American retail in the mid-twentieth century, employees' *fundamental*, *functional*, and *ideological loyalties* were crucial to the everyday functioning of retail businesses, and to retail executives' broader social, cultural and political agendas. Indeed, retail employee loyalties served four main purposes beyond thwarting the advance of trade unions: they helped to stem the tide of labour turnover, improve shop floor productivity, solicit and maintain customer loyalties, and advance retailers' political and ideological agendas to the amorphous body of consumers as citizens.

Peter Gurney, *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).

⁶ 'Publicity and Trade Unionism,' *GJLP* 31 (21 May 1949), 188-189. 'Unionisation,' *GJLP* 31 (12 Nov. 1949), 490. 'Limits of Free Bargaining,' *GJLP* 34 (30 Aug. 1952), 400-401. 'Trade Unionism and the Partnership,' *GJLP* 36 (2 Oct. 1954), 727. 'Trade Unions,' *GJLP* 38 (23 June 1956), 451-452. 'The Partnership and Trade Unions,' *GJLP* 1098 (17 Dec. 1960), 42. John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All* (London: Kerr-Cross Publishing Co., Ltd., 1948), 289-303.

⁷ George Kirstein, *Stores and Unionism: A Study of the Growth of Unionism in Dry Goods and Department Stores* (New York: Fairchild Publications, 1950). Samuel R. Zack, 'Industrial Peace for the Retailer,' *JR* 19 (Dec. 1943), 99-102. M. D. Mosessohn and A. Forman Greene, 'Collective Bargaining in Retailing,' *JR* 21 (Feb. 1945), 57-61.

⁸ Helen Baker and Robert R. France, *Personnel Administration and Labor Relations in Department Stores* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1950), 127-144.

Addressing Labour Turnover

At the most basic level, British and American retailers were dependent on their employees' *fundamental loyalties* for maintaining the stability of sales and service on which institutional reputations and customer patronage depended. Through the Second World War and the post-war years, department and variety store managers fretted at the high rates of labour turnover in their stores and the problems it caused. Consistently high labour turnover was not only problematic because of the cost of recruiting and training new staff, but also because skilled salesmanship on the selling floor and skilled craftsmanship in workrooms and offices depended on job experience and familiarity with store products and procedures.

It is likely that labour turnover was a problem for British and American retailers from at least the late nineteenth century when department stores began employing single women in greater numbers.¹⁰ However, during the Second World War, the problem of labour turnover in retail became a crisis as both Britain and America mobilised for war production and women found more lucrative employment in factories and other war-related service industries.¹¹ Not able to rival the manufacturing trades in rates of pay, retailers in all trades, but in general merchandise particularly, were faced with a polarised labour market dominated by very young and very mature employees. The situation was exacerbated by the retail sector's classification as 'non-essential' industry in America and in Britain where male and female shopworkers were heavily drawn upon to serve in essential industries.¹²

To counter the drain on retail labour resources, the 'great army of retailers' who constituted the National Retail Dry Goods Association (NRDGA) in America argued that retail was indeed essential. Their logic was that 'No other agency of

⁹ Andrea Tone, *The Business of Benevolence: Industrial Paternalism in Progressive America* (London: Cornell University Press, 1997).

¹⁰ Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 165.

¹¹ On women and war work, see Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 273-299. Penney Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

¹² From future President, Harry S. Truman, 'Manpower and the Retailer,' *BNRDGA* 26 (Feb. 1944), 44-45. 'A Saleswoman Speaks to Management,' *BNRDGA* 24 (Dec. 1942), 18-19, 44. 'The N.U.D.A.W. In 1941,' *ND* 21 (4 Jan. 1941), 8-9. The tension with industry continued in the early post-war years. George Plant, 'The Manpower Outlook,' *Stores* 33 (April 1951), 13-14, 58-60. George L. Plant, 'Stores' Manpower Problems,' *Stores* 32 (Nov. 1950), 28-29, 87-88.

American life has so many, and such frequent personal contacts with the general public. No other agency of American life has such potential influence on the mass of Americans as retailers have.’¹³ To an extent the American government agreed; the Treasury Department recognised shopworkers as the ‘third army’ for their efforts in selling war savings bonds, after the ‘first army’ on the war front and the ‘second army’ on the production front.¹⁴ This rhetoric may have proven enticing for some employees who sought work in retail for the explicit purpose of serving the war effort. However, despite the efforts of American retailers to infuse retail work with national importance during the war, labour turnover remained high in American department and variety stores during the Second World War. (See Table 1.1.)

The problem for British and American retailers was not simply that labour turnover grew during the Second World War, but that when it declined following the war, it remained higher than pre-war levels. In 1952 the *Drapers’ Record* reported that staff turnover had increased from 25 per cent before the war to over 50 per cent in West End London stores, while turnover stood closer to 40 per cent for suburban and provincial stores.¹⁵ At the John Lewis Partnership, annual turnover decreased from 46.6 per cent in 1950-51 to 34.4 per cent from 1958-59.¹⁶ However, from 1950 to 1967, a consistent average of 45 per cent of the staff at any one time consisted of employees who had been with the Partnership for less than two years.¹⁷ In America the NRDGA reported in 1951 that labour turnover in retail was still about 40 per cent annually.¹⁸ Of course, high labour turnover rates masked the fact that most stores in both the US and Britain had a small core

¹³ ‘It Is Our War—Let’s Get It Over With,’ *BNRDGA* 24 (Jan. 1942), 9-11. ‘Department Stores in the War,’ *DSE* 5 (July 1942), 39-46. ‘Department Stores Are the Instrument of a World-Wide Leveling Process,’ *BNRDGA* 25 (Feb. 1943), 54-55. ‘Retailing--An Essential Industry,’ *DSE* 6 (May 1943), 16, 49, 69. ‘The War Efforts of Retailing,’ *BNRDGA* 25 (Aug. 1943), 19-24.

¹⁴ ‘Treasury Department Asks Employees to Sell \$2,100,000.00 in War Bonds,’ *FG* 12 (23 Oct. 1944), 1. ‘6th War Loan Third Army Orders of the Day,’ *FG* 12 (30 Oct. 1944), 1, 3-4; and 12 (6 Nov. 1944), 4. ‘Are You a Buck Private? Or a Lieutenant-Colonel?’ *FG* 12 (20 Nov. 20 1944), 4. ‘The Third Army of the United States,’ *BNRDGA* 25 (Aug. 1943), 7-8. Lawrence R. Samuel, *Pledging Allegiance: American Identity and the Bond Drive of World War II* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 67.

¹⁵ ‘Staff Turnover Rate Still High,’ *DR* (29 Nov. 1952), 13.

¹⁶ ‘Labour Turnover,’ *GJLP* 42 (20 Feb. 1960), 67-68.

¹⁷ Yearly census in *GJLP* 32 (17 June 1950), 232; 33 (23 June 1951), 250; 34 (12 July 1952), 307; 35 (13 June 1953), 277; 36 (1 May 1954), 241; 37 (2 July 1955), 539; 38 (14 July 1956), 523; 39 (20 July 1957), 559; 40 (9 Aug. 1958), 648-649; 41 (19 Sept. 1959), 745; 42 (3 Sept. 1960), 740-741; 43 (15 July 1961), 549-551; 44 (4 Aug. 1962), 662-663; 45 (27 July 1963), 631-632; 46 (19 Sept. 1964), 840-841; 47 (24 July 1965), 616-617; 48 (25 June 1966), 540-541; 49 (2 Sept. 1967), 757.

**Table 1.1. Annual Labour Turnover Among Retail Staff at Sears, Roebuck,
1936–1947**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Turnover (%)</u>
1936	29.7
1937	31.9
1938	20.3
1939	25.2
1940	26.3
1941	40.8
1942	68.5
1943	72.5
1944	47.7
1945	49.1
1946	47.4
1947	39.3

Source: Boris Emmet, John E. Jeuck, *Catalogues and Counters: A History of Sears, Roebuck and Company* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950), 565, 583.

of long-term employees who served as familiar faces for customers, encouraging customer loyalties to stores, and continually improving their own knowledge of each store's merchandise and services. Still, the majority of employees left retail employment within a matter of months or a few years, a phenomenon that frustrated store owners and directors who tended to see training as a long-term investment, and who received letters from customers disappointed with the service they received from an ever-changing selling staff.¹⁹ (See Figure 1.2)

Aside from the newcomers to shop work, there were always some groups who were more likely than others to leave store employment. In 1953, the Retail Distributors' Association in Britain conducted a survey on retail staff turnover and concluded that 'the average annual rate among female selling staff is between 45 and 50 p.c.,' reiterating the common belief sounded in trade journals that men were more secure recruits than women.²⁰ At the Partnership in 1958-59, turnover for men was 25 per cent and for women 36 per cent.²¹ In a trade where women constituted up to three quarters of a single store's workforce, such statistics boded ill for department and variety store management.²² Retail managers were most concerned with the departure rates of trained selling staff—a field dominated, but not monopolised by women. Data available for John Lewis Partnership for 1966 and 1967 offered evidence that those employed at selling branches were twice as likely as those at non-selling branches to leave employment with the Partnership.²³

The high labour turnover rates in department and variety stores, particularly with relation to women and sales workers, were partially accounted for by the seasonal nature of shop work. Most stores employed women and students as 'extras' for the Christmas holidays and during periods of higher sales, with a generally clear understanding between managers and employees that the 'extra' position would be terminated following the height of the selling season.

¹⁸ NRDGA Personnel Group, *Training and Holding Employees* (New York: NRDGA, 1951), 96.

¹⁹ Most employee magazines from the period published letters from customers about the service they received, both good and bad. See, for example, the 'Brickbats and Bouquets' column, *FG* 21 (29 March 1954), 2, where a customer argues 'Your one-time high standards certainly seem to be on the downgrade.'

²⁰ 'Staff Turnover Figures in Department Stores,' *DR* (4 April 1953), 9, 12.

²¹ 'Labour Turnover,' *GJLP* 42 (20 Feb. 1960), 67.

²² Women consistently constituted 67 per cent (+/1.5 per cent) of the John Lewis Partnership membership from 1950 through 1967. Yearly census, *GJLP*.

²³ 'Staff Turnover Figures Slightly Better,' *GJLP* 48 (16 July 1966), 614-617. 'Staff Turnover,' *GJLP* 49 (21 Oct. 1967), 937.

Figure 1.2. Problems with labour turnover



"Please stay, Gloriz—I didn't mean it when I censured you for being uncivil to customers."

As demonstrated by this and the last image, the trope of a seemingly humble, contrite male employer vulnerable to independent-minded female employees, was a common one in retail business and union satirical art.

Through the post-war years, dry goods retailers commonly complained that they had to take what they could get in terms of staff, because even poor salespeople were better than a constant turnover of new staff.

Department Store Economist 8 (July 1945), 72.

(See Figure 1.3.) Although this phenomenon contributed to high turnover rates, retailers' persistent complaints about ongoing rank-and-file exodus suggests that there was something more to the story. Indeed, John Lewis Partnership turnover data available for 1966/67 demonstrated that in the first year of employment, women were more than five times more likely, and men nearly twice as likely, to resign than to have their employment terminated.²⁴ Despite the built-in redundancy of retail employment then, it seems the majority of department and variety store emigrants were leaving their places of employment of their own will. The challenge for retailers was to find ways to keep employees, especially women and newcomers, for longer periods of time.

Employees' *fundamental loyalties* were crucial to British and American department and variety store employers for stemming the tide of high labour turnover and the problems high turnover incurred. John Spedan Lewis, in his characteristically forthright style, argued that labour turnover was good for the Partnership because it would help 'to prevent the Partnership's becoming silted up with mediocrities' by getting rid of those 'not really first-rate' employees and opening space for more effective candidates.²⁵ However, most retail employers were not so optimistic and expressed continual concern about soliciting employees' *fundamental loyalties* in order to fulfil other institutional goals.

Retail Productivity and Emotional Labour

As industrial productivity grew in America and Britain in the early post-war years, department and variety store managers looked to increase shopfloor productivity in their own establishments. The drive for increased efficiency in post-war retail was in large part a consequence of increases in personnel costs. Although personnel costs remained stable as a percentage of sales in American retail overall, in department and variety stores payroll costs grew relative to sales.²⁶ Between 1939 and 1954, the payroll costs in nine American national variety store chains increased from 14.5 per cent of net sales to 18.7 per cent.²⁷ In the same period, payroll costs in American department stores increased from 17.8

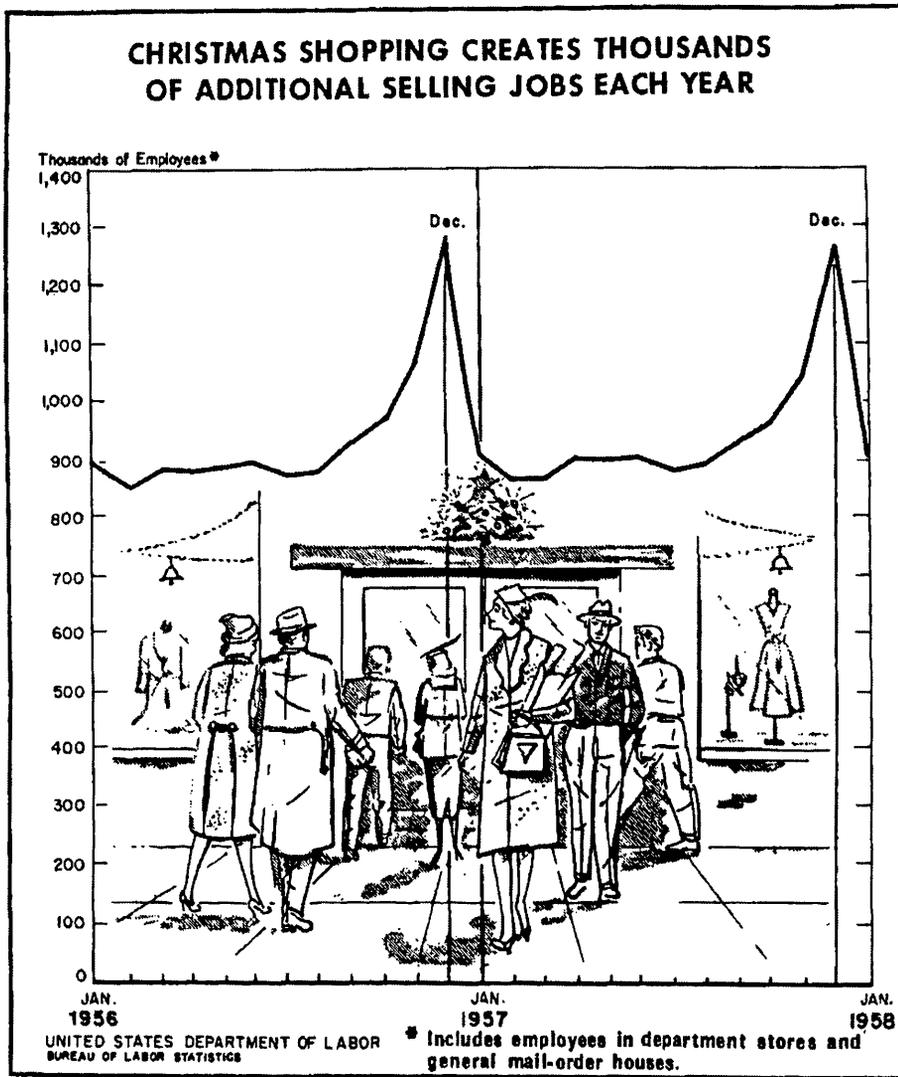
²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ 'Labour Turnover,' *GJLP* 33 (17 Nov. 1951), 546.

²⁶ Jules Backman, 'Retail Labor Costs,' *JR* 33 (Spring 1957), 5-13, 50.

²⁷ Lawrence R. Robinson and Eleanor G. May, *Self Service in Variety Stores* (Boston: Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration, 1956), 3.

Figure 1.3. The seasonal nature of shop work



U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, Bulletin 1255, (Washington, D.C., 1959), 537.

per cent to 18.2 per cent of net sales. There was a fall to 15 per cent for department stores during the war, but that only made the consequent increase appear even more severe.²⁸ In the British Co-operative retail societies, which included grocery as well as dry goods stores, personnel costs increased from 23.74 d. per pound of sales in 1936 to 28.53 d. per pound in 1966.²⁹ In efforts to compensate for rising personnel costs, British and American retailers introduced new rationalist technologies and selling procedures in the post-war years. They discovered, however, that retail productivity was not entirely as amenable to technological and managerial innovation as industrial productivity had proven to be. Despite changes in workplace procedures, retail productivity in the post-war years in the dry goods trades remained dependent on interpersonal methods of salesmanship and service, the emotional exchange such methods entailed, and in turn the *functional loyalties* of employees.

In efforts to improve retail productivity during the Second World War and the post-war years, department and variety stores in America and Britain stepped up implementation of Taylorist measuring devices and work procedures with hopes of improving both qualitative (service) and quantitative (sales) productivity. In their efforts to rationalise store procedures, department store merchants looked to both industry and other retail sectors for new ideas. By 1948, some American department stores had employed factory experts to analyse and streamline merchandising methods. Their analyses were founded on the basic theories of Frederick W. Taylor's concepts of scientific management, and aimed for 'the close co-ordination of all store personnel in a strong and well-planned economy program,' a programme 'based on the fundamental principles of effective labor utilization'.³⁰

The implementation of 'job analysis', 'job evaluation' and 'work simplification' programmes in American department stores in the late 1940s provided the basis on which the rationalisation of store work procedures could take place. Such programmes subjected routine activities in selling and non-selling departments to the dominion of the stopwatch and flow chart, demanding

²⁸ Malcolm P. McNair and Eleanor G. May, *The American Department Store, 1920-1960* (Boston: Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration, 1963), 22-25, 51-61.

²⁹ *Annual Co-operative Statistics* (Manchester: Co-operative Union), CA.

efficiency from each movement, task and interaction. (See Figure 1.4.) Many work simplification programmes depended on employee willingness to offer their own suggestions for improvement.³¹ By the mid-1950s similar programmes were being used in British department stores to improve shop floor productivity. In 1956 the John Lewis Partnership introduced a new Department of Productivity, Organisation and Methods for the explicit purpose of organising Work Studies and improving productivity in both selling and non-selling jobs.³² Similarly, the Co-operative movement established their own Co-operative National Productivity Committee in 1969.³³

The most conspicuous forms of rationalisation for selling and non-selling shopworkers were those concretised in new technologies in the post-war years. On the sales floor, sales cheque and pneumatic tube systems were replaced by cash registers, eliminating the time salespeople spent writing cheques and waiting for change to be made, and creating new sales floor positions defined entirely by cash register or check-out work. Other new technologies such as fixed price tags, care labels, brand information labels, pre-packaging, in-store promotional signs, and even store-sponsored vending machines for nylons, socks, ties, and baby wear allowed customers to make basic decisions on their own, saving the salesperson time and requiring less skill and merchandise knowledge. (See Figures 1.5 and 1.6.) So too did 'related selling', the practice of displaying together related goods, such as shirts and ties or socks and shoes, become a method of raising sales productivity. An advertisement promoting such techniques in 1942 articulated the

³⁰ 'What Retailing Can Learn from Industry,' *JR* 24 (Oct. 1948), 117-120. 'Modernizing Retailing,' *JR* 20 (Dec. 1944), 97-100. Joseph Callahan, 'Making Clerical Work Easier,' *DSE* 8 (June 1945), 90-92.

³¹ *Work Simplification*, 1948, *MFA*. 'Industry Methods Cut Store Costs,' *Women's Wear Daily*, (16 June 1947). 'Gimbels Use of Job Methods and Work Simplification,' *DSE* 9 (Dec. 1946), 84-85, 94. 'How to Carry Out a Work Sampling Study,' *Stores* 37 (Oct. 1955), 22, 24, 52. William R. Spriegel and Elizabeth Lanham, 'Job Evaluation in Department Stores,' *JR* 27 (Summer 1951), 79-85. Alfred Niemann, 'Work Simplification Program,' in Anne McNamara (Ed.), *Recruiting and Developing Store Executives* (New York: NRMA, 1967), 55-64. On suggestion programmes see, 'We're On the Error!,' *FG* 15 (15 March 1948), 4. 'Be Selfish,' *FG* 16 (28 June 1948), 2. "'Find Better Way—Have Better Job," Slogan Work Simplification Programme,' *FG* 16 (23 Aug. 1948), 1. 'An Active Campaign for MORE Suggestions,' *DSE* 9 (Oct. 1946), 20-21, 29. 'Efficiency Controls,' *BNRDGA* 30 (Aug. 1948), 28-34, 36, 56, 58. 'Partnership Jackpot,' *GJLP* 38 (7 July 1956), 516.

³² 'How to Raise Productivity in Retail Trade,' *DR* (21 June 1952), 16-17. F. W. Lawe, 'Pride of Profession,' *Stores* 38 (Oct. 1956), 57-60. 'Productivity and What It Means,' *GJLP* 37 (26 Nov. 1955), 1080; 37 (7 Jan. 1956), 1229. On the Partnership's productivity department, see 'Presenting Productivity,' *GJLP* 39 (7 Dec. 1957), 1006-1008; 39 (14 Dec. 1957), 1035-1038.

³³ Policy statement of the Co-operative National Wages Board and Joint Trade Union Negotiating Committee, *Efficiency and Productivity*, 28 Jan. 1969, CA.

Figure 1.4. Scientific management

MARSHALL FIELD & COMPANY
FLOW PROCESS CHART

JOB Tracking merchandise from
Holden Court Doors to 11th Floor

SUBJECT CHARTED Loaded Containers Trunks

CHARTED BY James Wilson

DATE December 4, 1947

DEPT Opening & Marking SEC. —

SUMMARY			
METHOD	PRES.	PROFD.	SAVG.
NO. OF OPERATIONS	7		
NO. OF TRANSPORTATIONS	10		
NO. OF STORAGES	5		
NO. OF INSPECTIONS	0		
MAN-MINUTES OR MINUTES	96		
DISTANCE TRAVELED	536 ft		

DETAILS (PRESENT APPROVED) METHOD	OPER.	TRANS.	STORAGE	INSPECT.	DIST. IN FEET	TIME IN MINUTES	WHY?				NOTES	
							UNNECESSARY	UNNECESSARY	UNNECESSARY	UNNECESSARY		
1 Waits at ramp-Holden Court	○	○	▽	□								
2 Pushed to loading area	○	○	▽	□	30							
3 Waits	○	○	▽	□		5						
4 Positioned next to trailer	○	○	▽	□								
5 Doors unlocked	○	○	▽	□		1/4						
6 Loaded with merchandise	○	○	▽	□		20						
7 Doors locked	○	○	▽	□		1/4						
8 Pushed away from loading area	○	○	▽	□	10							
9 Waits	○	○	▽	□		10						
10 Pushed to freight elevator	○	○	▽	□	30							Waiting
11 Taken to 11 th floor	○	○	▽	□	180	3						
12 Pushed off elevator	○	○	▽	□	8							
13 Waits	○	○	▽	□		10						
14 Pushed to unload	○	○	▽	□	40	2						
15 Doors unlocked	○	○	▽	□		1/4						
16 Cart emptied	○	○	▽	□		40						
17 Doors locked	○	○	▽	□		1/4						
18 Pushed to elevator	○	○	▽	□	40	2						
19 Pushed on elevator	○	○	▽	□	8							Just happened to be there
20 Taken to loading dock	○	○	▽	□	180	3						
21 Pushed off elevator	○	○	▽	□	10							
22 Waits	○	○	▽	□								

24-01-01 Form 187

By the early post-war years, many American department stores, including Marshall Field's, provided employees with the tools necessary to analyse and rationalise their own work processes.

Work Simplification (Chicago: Marshall Field & Company, 1948), 15, Courtesy of Marshall Field's archive

Figure 1.5. Saleswoman versus sales tag

**THIS TAG
SAYS MORE AT
A GLANCE THAN YOUR
SALES PEOPLE CAN SAY
IN AN HOUR!**

Selling time is important . . . important to your store in these days of manpower shortage. Important, too, to your customers, who appreciate fast service. That's why so many progressive retailers appreciate the time-saving element of the Narco* Certified Tag.

Attached to the garment or piece goods, it gives the consumer a complete quality story at a glance! It tells her

that the fabric is Narco rayon . . . that it has been certified under the Narco Quality Control Plan by the U. S. Testing Co. . . . that it has been tested and approved for:

SHRINKAGE	SEAM SLIPPAGE
COLOR FASTNESS	CONSTRUCTION
TENSILE STRENGTH	YARN UNIFORMITY

Feature the Narco Certified Tag prominently...it answers every question the consumer is likely to ask!

NARCO*
NORTH AMERICAN RAYON

*Narco is the registered trade-mark of the North American Rayon Corporation • 261 Fifth Avenue • New York, N. Y.

Advertisers commonly appealed to retailers' concerns regarding labour turnover to sell their goods and services meant to help rationalise shop work.

Department Store Economist 9 (Oct. 1946), 11.

Figure 1.6. Filene's U-Serve-U vending machines

Automatic selling center

*Filene's, Boston, pioneers with
bus terminal installation*



Delivery takes 2 seconds when the customer has selected merchandise from display, inserted coins and pushed machine button at Filene's new U-Serv-U automatic merchandise center, Boston, of which a section is shown here.

Filene's experiment in dry goods vending machines was much hailed in the trade press as the new frontier of department store selling, but the trend never really spread much further.

Department Store Economist 13 (July 1950), 45.

advantages of this 'wonderful invisible salesman' over the human sort: 'He doesn't want any compensation. He usually sells two items where an ordinary salesman would sell just one. (And the customer *likes* it!) He invites people to buy without speaking and makes it *easy* for them to buy. He cuts down shopping time. He's not draftable.'³⁴ Related selling displays were facilitated with the introduction of new self-service display constructions, adapted from their successful use in grocery stores in the 1930s. Self-service fixtures allowed customers open access to goods arranged according to size, colour, style or brand, moving the merchandise out from behind glass cases onto tables, racks, and specially-constructed display stands. (See Figures 1.7 and 1.8.) In addition to new shop floor technologies, the rapid diffusion of personal telephones over the 1950s and 1960s facilitated sales off the shop floor through the expansion of telephone and mail order selling departments.³⁵

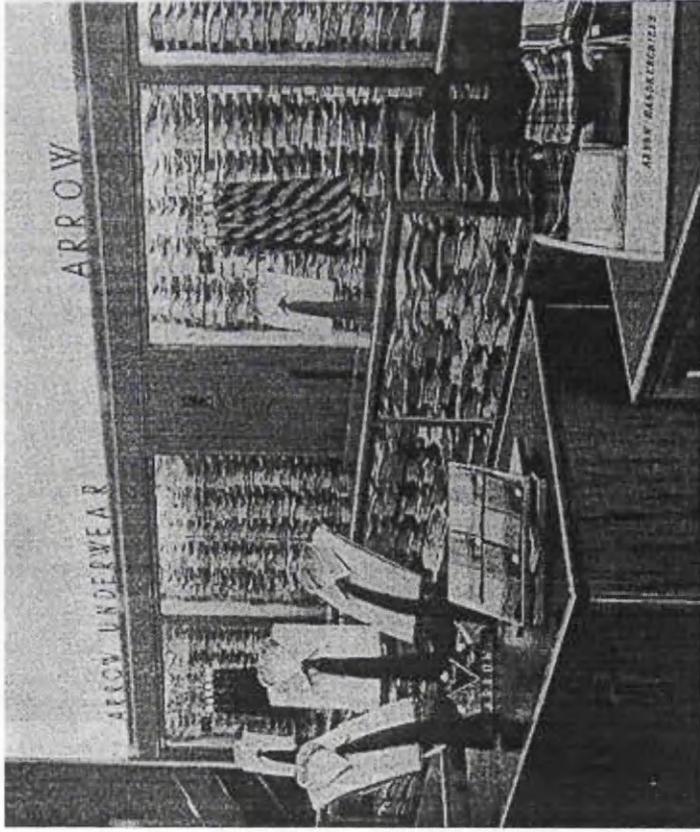
New technologies quickly infiltrated non-selling work as well. Backroom clerical staff learned to work with more adding machines, typewriters, cash-register-compatible accounting machinery, microfilm, improved price marking equipment and computers that by the early 1960s could produce weekly sales and commission reports previously calculated by buyers and bookkeeping personnel. Elevator operators were replaced by 'operatorless elevators' from 1954 in the US; employees in receiving departments acquired new power conveyors, electric hoists, dock levellers, fork lifts, and pre-printed interdepartmental forms to facilitate the checking and marking of new merchandise; and maintenance and delivery workers became accustomed to working with new electronic cleaning and transport-facilitating appliances. Additionally, pneumatic tubes began to facilitate the transfer of paperwork among non-selling departments as it had previously facilitated salesperson-cashier interactions.³⁶ (See Figure 1.9.)

³⁴ Italics in original. 'And Then There's the Wonderful Invisible Salesman,' *DSE* 5 (Nov. 1942), 4-5.

³⁵ S. J. Curtis, 'How the Cash Register Guards Your Store,' *Stores* 44 (Nov. 1962), 40-43. 'Simplified Retailing,' *Stores* 44 (Feb. 1962), 60-65. 'Nathan Katz, 'Analytic Guide for Reduction of Selling Expense,' *JR* 36 (Spring 1960), 36-41, 55-56. James M. Reynolds, 'Computers Don't Sell and Fixtures Don't Talk . . .,' *Stores* 45 (Nov. 1963), 30-32. For a prophecy of how salespeople could be replaced by computer technology connecting home to store, see 'Automation and the Department Store,' *Stores* 43 (March 1961), 14-16.

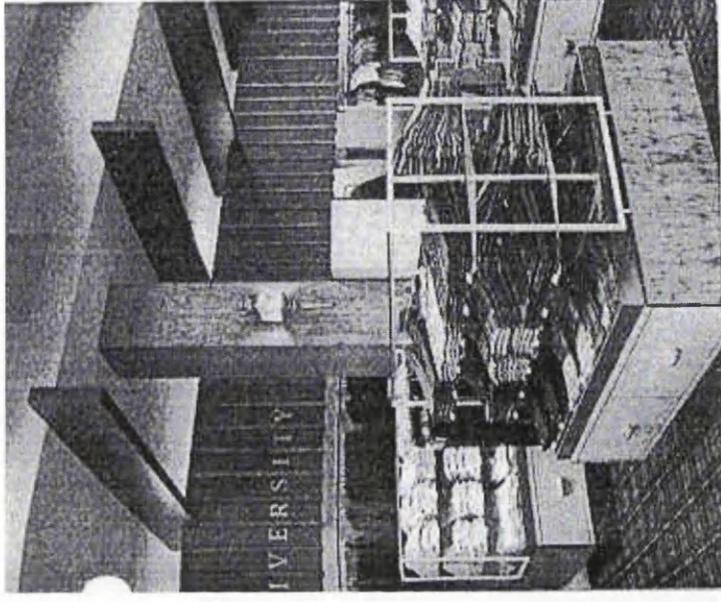
³⁶ 'Floor Audit of Sales at Carson Pirie Scott & Co.,' *DSE* 15 (Oct. 1952), 140, 145. C. Robert McBrier, 'Progress Report on EDP in Retailing,' *Stores* 42 (May 1960), 63-64. Kenneth R. Lavery, 'How Computer Systems Will Work for Tomorrow's Retail Management,' *Stores* 44 (December 1962), 15-17. 'Sales Data from a Tape-Punch Cash Register,' *Stores* 45 (June 1963), 19-20. 'Air Tube Communication Expedites Store Business,' *DSE* 16 (Nov. 1953), 36-37.

1.7. Counter selling



Department Store Economist 5 (10 May 1942), 16.

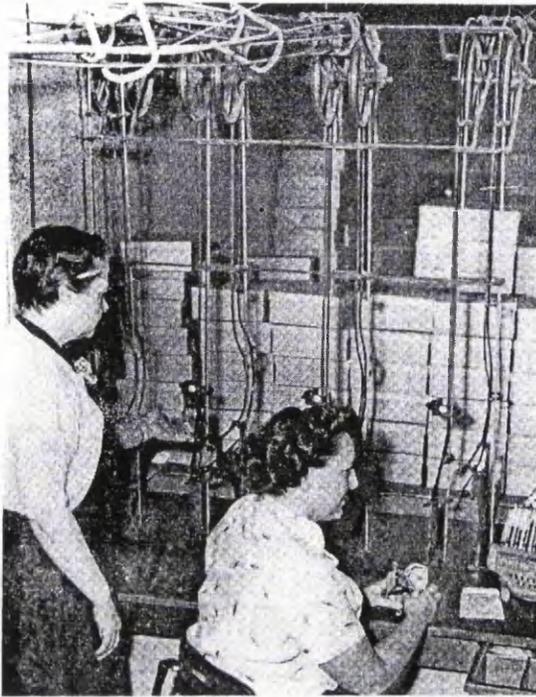
1.8. Self-selection



Stores 44 (July-Aug. 1962), 35.

Before self-selection (left), salespeople assisted one customer at a time by bringing goods out from behind counters and glass display cases for customer perusal. With introduction of self-selection display stands, (right) customers could examine and select goods themselves. Note the use of related selling (left) where men's shirts, ties and handkerchiefs were displayed together.

Figure 1.9. Cashier redundancy



When pneumatic tubes or pulley systems (above) were replaced with cash registers (below), as in this JC Penney store in Pennsylvania, salespeople took on the role previously performed by basement or backroom cashiers.

Pay Day 21 (March 1956), 7.

The introduction of self-service selling methods to department and variety stores arguably most altered the nature of shop work. In a study of new selling methods in American variety stores at mid-century, Lawrence Robinson and Eleanor May defined self-service as 'a system under which customers choose merchandise from displays and then take their selections to a checkout for payment'.³⁷ (See Figure 1.10.) With the implementation of self-service, the burden of the shopping experience gradually shifted from the salesperson to the (predominantly female) customer, effecting economies of labour that allowed for fewer salespeople to serve growing populations of customers.³⁸ After the proven success of self-service selling methods in American grocery stores in the inter-war years, some variety stores including Woolworth's and Marks & Spencer's began systematizing what to that point had been incomplete implementation of self-service methods. However, self-service was by no means wide spread in variety stores and was practically non-existent in department stores until the staff shortages and high labour turnover of the Second World War pushed American department and variety store managers to implement further such selling methods.³⁹ It was not until the mid-1950s that the majority of American variety stores fully implemented self-service, check-out style selling methods, as opposed to 'self-selection' only. Woolworth's opened its first self-service store in 1953, and by 1956 435 of its stores were organised on a self-service basis.⁴⁰ British stores were further behind, in part because rationing made self-service impracticable. For example, Woolworth's did not open its first full self-service store in Britain until September 1955.⁴¹ However, self-service and self-selection

'Mechanization of Store Routines,' *DSE* 16 (Jan. 1953), 134. 'National 390,' *Stores* 42 (July-Aug. 1960), 72. 'Cycle Billing,' *GJLP* 39 (19 Oct. 1957), 833-834. *A Report on Data Processing Equipment in Member Stores of the National Retail Merchants Association* (New York: NRMA, c. 1959).

³⁷ Robinson and May, *Self-Service*, 1.

³⁸ 'Ira Hayes: "I BEGGED the Clerk to Sell Me a Shirt,"' *Stores* 44, (April 1962), 19-21. For more on the 'work transfer' through self-service, see Nona Y. Glazer, *Women's Paid and Unpaid Labour: The Work Transfer in Health Care and Retailing*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), esp. 100-105.

³⁹ Viola P. Sylbert, 'Self-Service Experiments in Department Stores,' *JR* 18 (Oct. 1942), 74-81. 'More Self-Service as Personnel Ebbs,' *DSE* 5 (Dec. 1942), 30, 45. 'Self-Service. . . Best Friend of the Brands,' *DSE* 6 (May 1943), 39. 'Simplified Selling,' *DSE* 6 (Sept. 1943), 82. Nathan M. Orbach, 'Meeting the Labor Shortage in Retailing,' *JR* 19 (April 1943), 33-34. John W. Wingate, 'Wartime Personnel Problems in Department Stores,' *JR* 19 (Feb. 1943), 2-9, 17. Robinson and May, *Self-Service*, 5-8.

⁴⁰ Robinson and May, *Self-Service*, 7-8.

⁴¹ 'Self-Service Grows,' originally in *Financial Times* (27 Aug. 1955), reprinted in *GJLP* 37 (17 Sept. 1955), 816.

Figure 1.10. Self-service with checkout



In self-service stores, as in this Montgomery Ward's Rockford, Illinois store, goods were stacked on shelves for easy customer access with few salespeople on the shop floor. In these stores, sales floor work became almost exclusively limited to check-out labour where (mostly female) cashiers stood in one place and waited for customers to bring their goods for packaging and payment.

Stores 53 (April 1971), 12.

methods spread in the dry goods trades after British retailers saw early versions of these selling methods in action in American department and variety stores during the Anglo-American Council on Productivity Team visits of 1952.⁴²

In British and American department stores implementation of self-service and 'self-selection' display and check-out styles were only selectively applied to certain lines or departments.⁴³ However, in America the influence of self-service programmes expanded during the suburban department store building and expansion craze of the 1950s and '60s, as more merchants incorporated self-service fixtures and designs into new floor plans in order to serve the needs of the growing price-conscious middle classes better.⁴⁴ The implementation of self-service—or 'self-selection'—fixtures allowed department stores to cut back their sales staff by up to 40 per cent, while helping to 'make our salespeople more productive in peak selling periods'.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, despite the infiltration of such plans into even the most up-market department stores in America and Britain, debates over the proper balance of 'fixture selling' and 'personal selling' continued through the 1960s.⁴⁶

Rationalisation through job analysis, work simplification, the introduction of new technologies, and the implementation of self-service selling methods did reap some rewards. An American survey of retail productivity based on Census of Business statistics demonstrated that in department stores, sales per employee increased by 27 per cent between 1948 and 1963, at the same rate as the retail sector overall. In variety stores—the dry goods establishments which took self-service and technological innovation furthest—sales per employee increased by

⁴² 'Lessons From USA Retail Visit,' *DR* (8 Nov. 1952), 16-19. 'Elys, Wimbledon, to Try Self-selection,' *DR* (6 Dec. 1952), 21. 'Self-service Will Spread,' *DR* (23 Feb. 1952), 20. Edward Topham, 27 (Jan. 1953), 2-3. 'Large Margins—Lavish Service: Self-service Raises Dry Goods Turnover,' *CR*

⁴³ Sylbert, 'Self-Service Experiments,' 79-80.

⁴⁴ 'Changing the Department Store to Accomplish Mass Retailing,' *DSE* 16 (July 1953), 34-35, 136.

⁴⁵ 'Conversion to Open Selling,' *Stores* 45 (Aug. 1963), 35-36. 'Capturing the Walk-Out Dollars,' *Stores* 38 (March 1956), 58-68.

⁴⁶ Special issue including a contribution from Edward McFadyen, Editor of the British *Stores and Shops* magazine, 'Another Look at Self-Selection,' *JR* 36 (Summer 1960). 'People + Props = Profits,' *DSE* 16 (June 1953), 126. Store Management Group, *Simplified Selling* (New York: NRDGA, 1952). E. B. Weiss, 'Salespeople Can't Be Trained—and Shouldn't Be,' *Fortune* 46 (Nov. 1952), 131, 226, 228, 231. 'The Case for Self-selection,' and 'USA Self-service Techniques Not Bringing Lower Prices,' *DR* (17 Jan. 1953), 19, 20.

62 per cent in the same period, an increase in overall employee productivity matched only by car dealers.⁴⁷

Over the course of the post-war years general productivity in British retail improved even more than in American stores. From 1951 through 1981, labour productivity in American retail in general grew at an average of one per cent annually, while British retail labour productivity averaged two per cent annual growth.⁴⁸ But the British department and variety store trades did not necessarily reap the full benefits of this growth. In 1950 productivity in these stores, as measured by sales per employee, was higher than in other stores, standing at 109.5 per cent of sales productivity in the British retail trades overall. By 1961 this figure had dropped to 84.1 per cent, and by 1971 it had dropped further to 82.9 per cent.⁴⁹ Part of the relative decline of British department and variety store productivity vis-à-vis overall retail productivity can be attributed to the fact there were limits in the extent to which work simplification and self service could improve productivity in the dry goods trades. For example, in American variety stores, Robinson and May found that self service did little to improve sales of women's, misses' and juniors' ready-to-wear apparel, accessories, dry goods and domestic products.⁵⁰

The limitations of rationalisation in variety and department stores stemmed in large part from the unique nature of retail 'productivity'. Under Taylorist industrialism an individual manual worker's productivity was less a factor of his or her own motivation than a matter of the functioning speed of the system of machines and line workers in which the employee laboured. Time clocks, machinery and production schedules kept the individual worker responsible to fellow employees and to production goals, except when conditions of collective dissent stimulated work stoppages or slow-downs by the work group. While informal shopfloor work cultures in retail had also long regulated collective productivity, these work groups were more likely to lower overall productivity

⁴⁷ 'An Analysis of Some Changes in Retailing Productivity Between 1948 and 1963,' *JR* 44 (Fall 1968), 57-67.

⁴⁸ Smith, Anthony Douglas, & Hitchens, D. M. W. N., *Productivity in the Distributive Trades: A Comparison of Britain, America and Germany*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1985, esp. 123.

⁴⁹ Department of Industry, Business Statistics Office, *Report on the Census of Distribution and Other Services, 1971, Supplement* (London: HMSO, 1971), S/124.

⁵⁰ Robinson and May, *Self-Service*, 42.

than improve it.⁵¹ More importantly, on the retail shop floor customers could not be manipulated as part of line production. In effect, retail productivity depended less on how quickly a customer could be served than on how much each customer could be encouraged to buy.

Rationalist managerial and technological innovations in retail were limited by the degree to which they could regulate largely uncontrollable factors that impinged directly on employee productivity. These factors included the weather, shifts in national and local economies, availability of merchandise, and other social, political and economic dynamics that influenced consumers' buying moods. More importantly, the introduction of Taylorist managerial styles and technologies did little to change the fact that individual sales and service productivity depended heavily on the employee's internal motivation to employ better selling techniques, or to hasten the speed at which gifts were wrapped, parcels were delivered, or stock was put away. In selling and service departments, retail productivity was heavily reliant on 'emotional labour', as Arlie Hochschild labelled it in the 1980s, and on employees' capacity for unregulated self-induced productivity.⁵² In other words, retail employers depended greatly on their employees' *functional loyalties* to fuel improvements in productivity beyond what new technologies could alone secure.

Hochschild's work on emotional labour developed theories about the nature of service employment originally put forward by C. Wright Mills in his 1951 classic, *White Collar*. Mills adeptly described the 'personality market' that was American—and arguably British—retail employment. He described productivity in department store salesmanship not simply as an exchange in merchandise, but as an emotional exchange between strangers in an increasingly anonymous salesperson/customer relationship.⁵³ Hochschild's work, published in 1983, outlined the relational dynamics, psychological skill, personal rewards and consequences of work based more on emotional exchange than manual production. Hochschild defined emotional labour as work which demands that the

⁵¹ Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 248-250, 253-258. George F. F. Lombard, *Behavior In a Selling Group: A Case Study of Interpersonal Relations in a Department Store* (Boston: Harvard University, 1955), 147-167

⁵² Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (London: University of California Press, 1983).

⁵³ C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956) 182-188.

employee manage his or her physical, mental and emotional state in order to incur a desired emotional response or state of mind from the customer. Transactions between customer and employee in circumstances of emotional labour may or may not involve the transfer of goods or merchandise, but always involve the attempted manipulation of emotion in customers and service employees by employees themselves.⁵⁴

Retail sales and service productivity fit the model of emotional labour well. Most post-war salesmanship advice manuals and columns agreed that satisfying the customer's material needs was not sufficient. The sales or service transaction was not complete until the customer expressed satisfaction that his or her material needs had been met, until the customer's self-image had been augmented by the merchandise purchased or the service rendered, until the customer had come to associate his or her personal prestige with the store at hand, until the 'self-importance and human dignity of the other guy' had been fulfilled.⁵⁵ In manufacturing, the end goal of the production process was clear-cut—the finished product. However, as Hochschild argued, 'in processing people, the product is a state of mind.'⁵⁶ In retail, the end goal of the 'production process' was not simply a complete transaction, but the satisfaction of customer expectations to the degree that customers would return, but merchandise would not.⁵⁷

In the post-war years, employee magazines and retail publishers produced a plethora of columns and handbooks instructing sales and service employees in the cultivation of personal qualities most highly correlated with retail productivity. These guides to better salesmanship were similar to guides of previous decades insofar as they outlined specific techniques for improving sales: for example, suggestive selling and 'selling up' to higher quality (and higher

⁵⁴ Hochschild, *Managed Heart*, 7. For more on emotional labour in service sector and professional employment (including academia), see 'Emotional Labor in the Service Sector' special issue of *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 561 (Jan. 1999); for an overview of the historical and sociological literature on emotional labour, see in particular Ronnie J. Steinberg and Deborah M. Figart, 'Emotional Labor Since *The Managed Heart*,' 8-26.

⁵⁵ 'How to Turn Our Walk-Out Dollars into Stay-In Dollars,' *FG* 17 (27 June 1949), 6. 'How Expert Salespeople Sell,' *JR* 31 (Fall 1955), 119-124, 148-150.

⁵⁶ Hochschild, *Managed Heart*, 6.

⁵⁷ On the problem of returned goods, see Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 51-52, 98-99.

priced) goods.⁵⁸ However, guides to salesmanship in the post-war years diverged from the format of previous decades by using popular psychological theories to examine in more depth the interpersonal dynamics of the sales transaction. Authors of these new guides to salesmanship repudiated the aggressive, hard selling tactics of past retail practices, in large part because such tactics only resulted in forced purchases that customers later returned. Instead, they advised sales and service employees to develop in themselves the 'contagious' qualities that most directly correlated with higher sales: cheerfulness, optimism, enthusiasm, respect, courtesy, friendliness, confidence, patience, a convincing smile, and, most importantly, sincere belief in the merchandise.⁵⁹ By contrasting aggressive selling styles of the past with sympathetic selling styles of their present, authors of salesmanship columns and manuals tended to present post-war selling style as a more passive, emotionally inducing, but not forceful method of acquiring higher sales. This presentation generally understated the *active* labour involved in reading customer desires and transforming one's performance, expressions and speech accordingly.

The gradual transformation in salesmanship advice that began at the turn of the century but blossomed in the post-war years could be characterised as a shift from 'pressure selling' to 'retail therapy'.⁶⁰ In the therapeutic model, the customer was to receive the unadulterated attention of the employee serving him or her, regardless of the employee's other obligations. The shopworker was to respond sympathetically, not only to the customer's merchandise needs, but to whatever personal problems customers might share with the person serving him or her. Sales and service advice columns instructed retail employees in the methods

⁵⁸ 'Suggestive Selling—Works Like Magic!' *SC* 54 (Oct. 1963), 3. 'You Can Use Suggestion Selling For a Year's Smash Finish,' *PN* 24 (Nov.-Dec. 1958), 2. 'JC Penney Will Make Contest Awards,' 13 (Feb. 1949), 1, 3.

⁵⁹ 'We Live By Selling,' *HG* 44 (Feb. 1959), 80; 44 (April 1959), 228; and 44 (Aug. 1959), 462. 'Talking it Up,' *FG* 23 (21 May 1956), 2. "'Perfect Shopkeeper" is Given a Set of Rules,' *The Kenbar* 5 (May 1957), 3, UGA, HF51/5/5/41. 'Can You Answer "Why?"' *The Kenbar* 3 (Jan. 1953), 20, UGA, HF51/5/5/27. 'Problem Page,' *The Kenbar* 3 (June 1953), 4, UGA, HF51/5/5/30. 'Accent on Timely Selling,' *SC* 51 (Nov. 1960), 7. 'He Doesn't Sell—He Helps Customers Buy,' *PD* 19 (March 1954), 4-5. The emotional qualities that led to higher sales differed by customer, James E. Stafford and Thomas V. Greer, 'Consumer Preference for Types of Salesmen: A Study of Independence-Dependence Characteristics,' *JR* 41 (Summer 1965), 27-33, 47. The emotional labour of shopworkers took on additional significance during the war as a means for boosting public morale, 'Build the Salesperson's Morale and He'll Do as Much for Your Customers,' *BNRDGA* 24 (Sept. 1942), 10-11, 43-44.

⁶⁰ On the move away from pressure selling, see Maryan Linck, 'High Pressure—Sales Saboteur,' *DSE* 7 (April 1944), 84-85.

of becoming a better and more convincing friend or therapist to the customer. Such columns advised sales and service personnel to improve their listening skills, to understand and sympathise with the customer, to constantly evaluate and categorise customer relational styles and merchandise requirements, to cultivate the practical and interpersonal skills necessary to respond to those emotional and material needs and, above all, to convince the customer that his or her needs and desires superseded all others. The goal, simply stated, was to help the customer forget the underlying material aims of retail business by improving employees' abilities to elicit spontaneously the confidence, trust and familiarity in salesperson/customer relationships (that would take years to develop in real friendships or therapeutic relationships) that would lead to higher, more secure sales in the long term. Paradoxically, the same columns advised sales and service employees to be 'friendly but not familiar'—to abstain from gossiping, sharing their own problems with customers, patronising customers by calling them by pet names, or accepting gifts or favours from customers. The usually temporary and superficial friendships constructed between shopworkers and customers were not to be reciprocal.⁶¹ (See Figures 1.11 and 1.12.)

When properly performed, the post-war retail therapy model of productivity in department and variety stores necessitated 'deep acting' on the part of shopfloor employees.⁶² Post-war columns and manuals of advice for sales and service employees in Britain and America continually emphasised the importance of authenticity and sincerity. Authors of such advice claimed that customers could easily tell the difference between superficial, routine courtesies and genuine interest in the customer's personal needs and desires. They suggested that higher sales depended on the believability of shopworkers' emotional performances. Consequently, advice literature encouraged sales and service employees to move from the routine, mechanical phrases, expressions and emotions into which shopworkers so easily lapsed, into a state of genuine

⁶¹ At times both employees and customers broke this code of conduct, a theme examined in more depth in Chapter 2. 'Meet Forty Top-Notch Salespeople,' *JR* 17 (Feb. 1941), 19-22. 'We Live by Selling,' *HG* 44 (May 1959), 288; 44 (June 1959), 324; 44 (Oct. 1959), 531; 44 (Nov. 1959), 573. 'Let the Customer Talk!', *Kenbar* 4 (Sept. 1953), 6, UGA, HF51/5/5/31. 'Steps in a Sale,' *HG* 40 (Jan. 1955), 4. 'Listen Your Way to Better Sales,' *PN* 24 (Feb. 1959), 2. *The Friendliest Store in Town*, 'Sales Training Guides, 1960s-70s' folder, Box 163, MWC.

⁶² For more on the literature of 'surface' and 'deep' acting beyond the workplace, see Hochschild, *Managed Heart*, 35-55.

Figure 1.11. Highly valued: Adaptability and a pleasant demeanour



Sale Service

'Adaptability is a great asset in Salesmanship. As each new situation arises the good Sales Assistant will try different ways of meeting the challenge.'

Harroldian Gazette 42 (7 July 1957), 378.

Figure 1.12. The customer always comes first

SALESMANSHIP—How to Lose Customers and Irritate People

By Lora McGraw and Marion Schleicher



Your hair looks a fright and that dopy dame ought to know you can't wait on her till you comb it and fix your face. Great Scott—isn't she a woman? Doesn't she comb HER hair or use make-up? At least, she can see you're busy—yes, too busy to wait on her NOW. Some people!

Now look—5:30 and just time enough to get your tables covered and get out—and there's that female still pawing through stock! After all, doesn't she know it's time to go home—or hasn't she got one? Maybe if I give her a dirty look and sort of ignore her, she'll go away. (And STAY.)

That boy! Thinks he's so smart—and never can remember how you want things done! Or maybe he's just ornery. Roast him good—right out on the floor in front of folks—then maybe he won't forget! It'll probably do him good, and give such a pleasant atmosphere to the place—no doubt of it.

She said she wanted something to wear to a picnic—that this wasn't quite what she had in mind. Well—now isn't that silly! This woman doesn't know WHAT she wants! She looks lovely—simply lovely—in this outfit. Get another salesgirl to help put on pressure—it's guaranteed to irritate.

Pay Day 11 (Aug. 1946), 3.

'radiant' affability. As one JC Penney columnist advised, 'You gotta feel it from the bottom of your stockings.'⁶³ (See Figure 1.13.)

What retail employers sought, though, was not sincerity in general, but 'sincerity' as carefully constructed to fit the ideal model of customer service, consistent with *functional loyalty* to the organisation. As Mills pointed out in his study, true sincerity on the part of shopworkers could be detrimental to their jobs if they expressed the frustration, impatience and derision many felt toward customers.⁶⁴ Staff magazines offered much advice in techniques of self-manipulation meant to help shopworkers *abstain* from expressing their sincere emotions. Consider, for example, the following from the *Field Glass*: 'Hold your breath and curtsy low, Do not let your feelings show, Turn around and turn again, Very slowly count to ten.'⁶⁵ Indeed, shopworkers were to control their emotions at all costs, lest a customer's loyalty be lost. As a jaded, yet well-inculcated employee of Gimbel's department store in New York argued: 'Even when you want to bash a customer's brains out, you've got to keep on grinning and agreeing. Else you might lose a sale—and that's a cardinal sin.'⁶⁶ (See Figure 1.14.)

The goal for retail employers then, was not to foster an atmosphere of genuine sincerity, but to use training and incentive programmes to transform employees' relational styles on a deeper level, which could in turn be 'genuinely' expressed on the shop floor. To that end, in 1946, Marshall Field's of Chicago created a training film, entitled 'By Jupiter', which encouraged shopworkers to believe that 'Courtesy is a philosophy, a way of life, a faith.' The film followed a day in the life of a young salesman who successfully negotiated his life outside the store by fostering an uncompromised, devout ethic of courtesy. 'By Jupiter' was widely distributed in the US, Britain, France and Australia where retail and other service employers sought to nurture in their employees not only superficial skills in 'surface acting', but deep and sustainable personal transformations that correlated with the customer service model.⁶⁷

⁶³ 'Friendship to Strangers,' *PN* 25 (Sept. 1959), 2. 'Enthusiasm,' *PD* 20 (Oct. 1954), 2.

⁶⁴ 'Courtesy Week Talk,' *FG* 13 (3 June 1946), 3. 'Meet Forty Top-Notch Salespeople,' 19-22.

⁶⁵ Mills, *White Collar*, 183.

⁶⁶ 'The Customer is Always Right,' *FG* 19 (Dec. 1951), 4.

⁶⁷ From an interview with *Look* magazine, quoted in '500,000 Department Store Jobs,' *Local 1401 Association Letter* (February 1942), 2-3.

⁶⁷ 'By Jupiter,' Training Division folder, MFA.

Figure 1.13. 'You gotta feel it from the bottom of your stockings'



These Penney's salespeople were literally selling from their stockings in these promotions for men's walking shorts and women's nylons.

Pay Day 21 (Oct. 1955), 1.
Penny News 23 (July 1957), 1.

Figure 1.14. 'Do not let your feelings show'



Complaints

This introduction to Co-operative employment graphically demonstrated for new employees the importance of personal control for handling unruly customers.

Serving Our Members in Dry Goods Departments (Manchester: Co-operative Union, 1955), 37.

According to Hochschild, the deep acting and ‘sincerity’ service employers sought was a state where ‘not simply the body, or immediately accessible feeling, but the entire world of fantasy, of subconscious and semiconscious memory, is conceived as a precious resource.’⁶⁸ She contended that jobs saturated with emotional labour demand that employees offer not only manual or intellectual skills, but their very selves as a commodity to be bought and sold as part of the labour exchange.⁶⁹ At mid-century, department and variety store employers commonly invoked their employees’ belief systems, imaginations, and selves in efforts to improve shopfloor customer service. Retail managers were not shy about explicitly requesting that employees ‘sell’ themselves as part of the sales/service transaction: in 1954, an assistant buyer at Harrods advised, ‘Before you begin to make any attempt to sell your merchandise at all you have to “sell” yourself.’⁷⁰ His sentiments were shared by retailers on both sides of the Atlantic who advised their employees to transform their physical appearances, speech patterns, and emotional styles in order to meet the customers’ expectations more fully and boost sales productivity in turn.⁷¹ Indeed, from his contemporary standpoint in the 1950s, Mills argued that the retail employer ‘buys the employees’ social personalities’, their very selves as part of the labour contract.⁷² (See Figure 1.15.)

Employees’ *functional loyalties* were crucial to department and variety store employers precisely because retail productivity depended so heavily on employees’ willingness to go beyond the physical routines of shopfloor work and invest themselves in the emotionally and psychologically fatiguing labour of customer relations. Changes in retail managerial style in Britain and America at mid-century were symptoms of retail employers’ search for the right mix of material and psychological rewards most likely to help employees bridge that gap between physical and emotional labour.

⁶⁸ Hochschild, *Managed Heart*, 40.

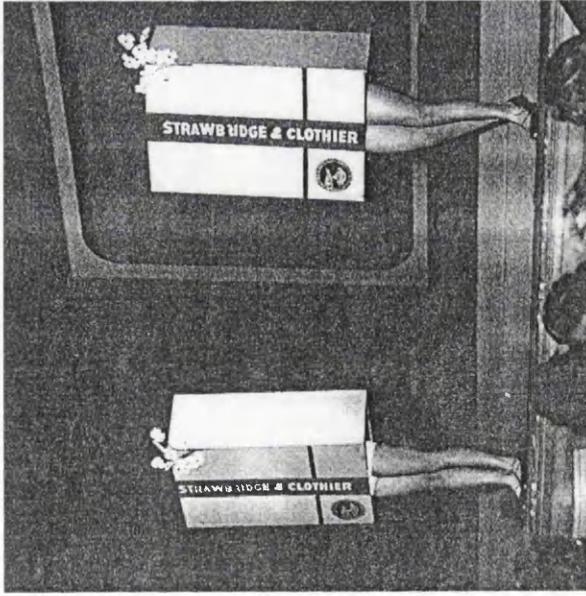
⁶⁹ Hochschild, *Managed Heart*, 118-121, 198.

⁷⁰ ‘The Emphasis is on Selling,’ *HG* 39 (May 1954), 180-181.

⁷¹ The irony in all of these articles was that the main advice they offered was to look good or sound good in a way that seemed ‘natural,’ not feigned or ‘affected.’ ‘You and I—For Sale,’ *Kenbar* 1 (Aug. 1950), 14-15, UGA, HF51/5/5/5. ‘Have A Way with People,’ *PN* 24 (Jan. 1959), 2. ‘Twelve Principles of Professional Salesmanship,’ *SC* 50 (Oct. 1959), 8-9. ‘Good Grooming: Key to Smart Personal Appearance,’ *SC* 52 (Feb. 1961), 4. Rose Laird, ‘Selling Through Appearance,’ *HG* 36 (Sept.-Oct. 1951), 312. ‘Talking to the Customer: An Article on Voice Production,’ *Kenbar* 4 (April 1954), 8, UGA, HF51/5/5/33.

⁷² Mills, *White Collar*, 182.

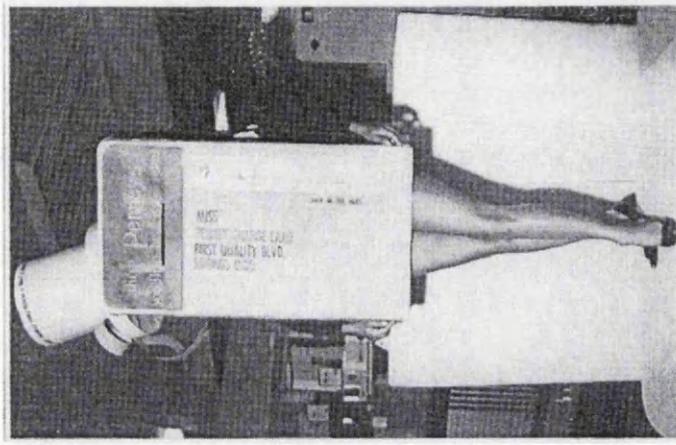
Figure 1.15. Subordination of self to the sales motive



Store Chat, (March 1954 folder),
Strawbridge & Clothier collection, Hagley
Museum and Library Pictorial Collection.



Penny News 24 (Aug. 1958), 1.



Penney News 27 (Jan. 1962), 4.

In the 1950s and '60s it became a trend in American stores, including Strawbridge and Clothiers and JC Penneys, for saleswomen to sell gift boxes (left), blankets (centre), store charge cards (right), and other items by dressing up in this way. These promotions visually portrayed the underlying ethic of sales advice—that salespeople should sell themselves as part of the sales transaction. In this case, saleswomen's personalities were entirely eclipsed by the item for sale, only their legs left to do the talking.

Courting the Customer

The importance of *fundamental loyalties* for averting labour turnover and of *functional loyalties* for improving retail productivity were managerial ends in their own right. However, it was the goal of soliciting and maintaining customer loyalties that made employees' *fundamental* and *functional loyalties* so crucially important to British and American retailers. Despite rationalisation and self-service in the early post-war years, customer relations with shop floor workers remained crucial to maintenance of consumer patronage in department stores and even, to a lesser extent, in variety stores.

From the advent of print advertising, retail customer relations were inherently different from the relationship between industrial firms and their consumers. Industry barons could fuel consumer desire and solicit patronage directly through advertisements that separated consumers from producers of the product to be sold, and bypassed the local merchant in the process.⁷³ In contrast, the construction of customer loyalties to an individual retail store depended heavily on the customer's personal interactions with sales and service employees. Department store managers were acutely aware that no apologies or business tactics could undo the damage inflicted on a store's reputation in a short period of time by a handful of disgruntled salespeople. Maintenance of customer loyalties required that stores sustain a reliable level of service, nurture positive interpersonal relationships between salespeople and 'regular' customers, and enhance the customer's self-image within a hierarchical social class system through relationships on the selling floor.⁷⁴

Through the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, department stores enabled middle-class, and even some working-class customers to escape into an opulent environment saturated with the luxuries and comforts previously known only to the upper classes. Historians of both British and American

⁷³ On the history of advertising, see Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976). Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets and Class at the Turn of the Century* (London: Verso, 1996). Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

⁷⁴ For more on management/customer/labour relations in department stores at the turn of the century, see Benson, *Counter Cultures*; Bill Lancaster, *The Department Store: A Social History* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 125-158; Christopher Hosgood, "Mercantile

department stores have argued that this shift in the forms and methods of middle-class consumption challenged the reputations of new emporiums. In particular, as Elaine Abelson and Erika Rappaport have argued, social critics and smaller retailers were keen to blame the lavish physicality of the department store shopping experience for the kleptomania and general moral degeneracy of certain middle-class female customers and saleswomen.⁷⁵ Consequently, department store managers realised that in their efforts to build more respectable institutional reputations and attract respectable customers, they would need to maintain a constancy of atmosphere, merchandise and service. Sales assistants, delivery workers, telephone operators and other shop floor employees were crucial to this effort in their dual role as ambassadors from management to the customer, and as handmaidens to the masters and mistresses of middle-class consumption. The deferential service customers would come to expect as part of their overall shopping experience depended heavily on the shopworker's loyalty to her store and on her willingness to perform the desired role.⁷⁶

By the mid-twentieth century little had changed. Employees remained the key mediators between retail managers and their customers, the face of their stores to the consuming public. As one Harrods columnist reminded employees in 1951, 'Remember you are the last contact between the customer and the firm, and therefore the most important link in the organization; not just *The Staff*.'⁷⁷ Employee loyalties and consistently good service had been important to department stores in the mid-nineteenth century for recruiting new customer loyalties through the construction of institutional reputations. In the mid-twentieth century polite, efficient service would prove crucial for staving off the erosion of department store customer bases in the face of competition from the multiples.

The extent of the competition between department and variety stores is not easily discerned, but retailers on both sides of the aisle at mid-century certainly

Monasteries": Shops, Shop Assistants, and Shop Life in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain' *Journal of British Studies* 38 (July 1999), 322-352.

⁷⁵ Elaine S. Abelson, *When Ladies Go A-Thieving: Middle-Class Shoplifters in the Victorian Department Store* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Erika Rappaport, "The Halls of Temptation": Gender, Politics, and the Construction of the Department Store in Late Victorian London' *Journal of British Studies* 35 (Jan. 1996), 58-83. See also William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchant, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 112-150.

⁷⁶ On customers expectations, Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 134.

considered it important. Through retail organisations such as the NRDGA and the Drapers' Chamber of Trade, directors of traditional department stores complained frequently of competition with the variety and discount store multiples, accusing such stores of sapping traditional department store consumer bases.⁷⁸ This is one of the great ironies in the history of the 'retail revolution', given that only a century earlier smaller retailers had accused nascent department stores of imposing on *their* customer bases.⁷⁹ The case for variety store competition was plausible in Britain, where James Jefferys estimated that the department store trade grew from one to two percent of total retail sales to between 4.5 and 6 per cent between 1900 and 1950. In the same period, the multiples' share of trade grew from around 4 per cent in 1900 to 19 per cent in 1950.⁸⁰ However, even in Britain the problem was less one of department store versus variety store than one of independent store versus multiple. Between 1950 and 1957, the independent store share of the department, variety and general store trade in Britain dropped dramatically from 79 to 31 per cent. At the same time, the Co-operative movement's share in that trade tripled from 10.5 to 32.2 per cent, while the multiple shops' share also increased from 10.5 to 36.6 per cent.⁸¹

In America, the statistics are even less straightforward regarding department and variety store competition. A 1963 Harvard Business School study showed that between 1929 and 1960 the department store sales index increased more than the variety store index, demonstrating that department stores were doing relatively well. The problem was that both the department and variety store indices increased less than the total retail sales index—a consequence of the fact that the main competition for consumer expenditure was coming primarily from the furniture and appliance stores and the automotive group, particularly in the late 1940s and '50s.⁸² The problem for American department store executives was not that their stores were not doing well then, but that in a market dominated

⁷⁷ Laird, 'Selling Through Appearance,' 312.

⁷⁸ For example, 'How to Combat Chain and Multiple Competition,' *DR* (3 March 1951), 17-18.

'The Month in Retailing,' *Stores* 36 (Sept. 1954), 10-11.

⁷⁹ Rappaport, 'Halls of Temptation,' 58-61.

⁸⁰ James B. Jefferys, *Retail Trading in Britain, 1850-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1954), 73.

⁸¹ T. W. Cynog-Jones, 'Report Upon the Census of Distribution,' *ND* 13 (3 Oct. 1959), 634.

⁸² The department store index included mail order. McNair and May, *The American Department Store*, esp. 11-15. E. B. Weiss, *Selling To and Through the New Department Store* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1948), 1-10. 'The Wind of Change in Retailing,' *In Company* 3 (Spring 1961), 39-41, HF1/8/1/1/2, UGA.

by growth in sales of consumer durables, they were never doing well enough as long as they had to share the non-durable consumer market with variety and discount stores.

The battle between department and variety stores for customer loyalties was fought on two fronts: price and service. As the mass market in both Britain and America grew at mid-century to include more lower-middle and working-class consumers, many customers' loyalties became increasingly determined by price.⁸³ In the post-war years, department stores in Britain and America were determined to respond to this trend and tap into the expanding mass market by extending seasonal sales and expanding their range of lower priced goods.⁸⁴ (See Figure 1.16 and 1.17.) However, even with diversified merchandise lines and lower-priced goods, fierce price competition meant that department stores' customer loyalties continued to depend on the quality of the interaction between the sales assistant and the customer. In 1954 the general merchandise manager at Marshall Field's—the American bastion of customer service—contended, 'What we have to sell is becoming less and less important—since our competitors can usually get the same goods. What is becoming more and more important is *how we sell, the way we treat our customers.*'⁸⁵ Post-war British department store executives concurred, arguing that '*A woman is not going to shop with you to-day just because her family has always done so, or even because she herself has been satisfied in the past. If there is a good article in a chain store down the road at a more convenient price she will buy it.*'⁸⁶

As a consequence of heightened price competition at mid-century, uncertain customer loyalties, and renewed emphasis on customer service, British

⁸³ On the changing nature of customer loyalties and the influence of price, see Phil Lyon, Anne Colquhoun and Dave Kinney, 'Food Shopping in the 1950s: The Social Construction of Customer Loyalty', paper presented at the CHORD conference, Wolverhampton, Sept. 2002. 'Big Stores Sharpening Price Weapon?' *DR* (29 March 1952), 70-71. For more on changes in consumption in Britain and America in the mid-twentieth century, see John Benson, *The Rise of Consumer Society in Britain, 1880-1980* (London: Longman, 1994). Gary Cross, *An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

⁸⁴ 'Removal of the Expensive Look,' *DR* (17 Feb. 1951), 19. For more on American department store responses to changes in consumer markets, see Beatrice Judelle, 'The Changing Customer, 1910-1960,' *Stores* 42 (Nov. 1960), 7-24. On the use of sales to attract lower-class customers at the turn of the century, see Christopher Hosgood, 'Mrs Pooter's Purchase: Lower-Middle-Class Consumerism and the Sales, 1870-1914,' in Alan Kidd and David Nicholls (Eds.), *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 146-163.

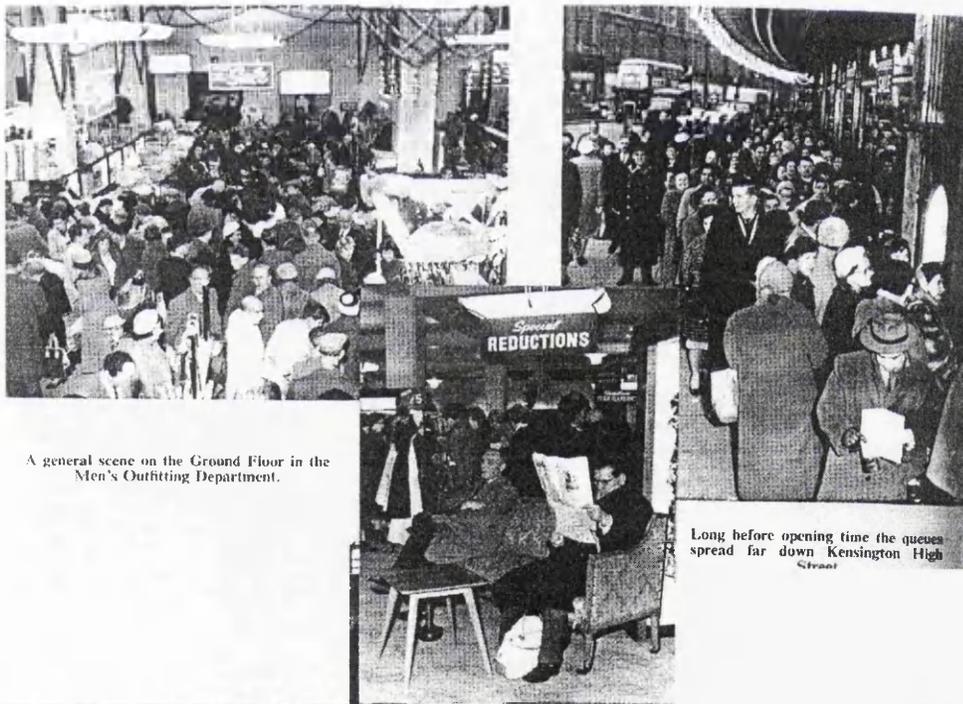
⁸⁵ Italics in original. 'Somebody Special,' *FG* 22 (13 Sept. 1954), 2.

Figure 1.16. Mass consumption at JC Penney's



Pay Day 11 (Oct. 1946), 4.

Figure 1.17. Sale time at John Barkers



A general scene on the Ground Floor in the Men's Outfitting Department.

Long before opening time the queues spread far down Kensington High Street

In Company 3 (Spring 1961), HF 1/8/1/1/2.

When variety stores and the 'junior' department store multiples like JC Penney's in America drew in the post-war crowds, traditional department stores in Britain and America, including John Barkers in London, resorted to sales to maintain the patronage of middle and lower-middle class customers. Note the roles of male customers in these images, confined to shopping in men's departments and waiting for shopping spouses.

and American department stores became increasingly concerned with reinventing 'store character'. What department store directors had long enviously sought was an image among customers fostered through advertising, merchandise and service, that would compensate for somewhat higher prices by drawing attention to the department store as an exemplar of corporate citizenship and a repository of bourgeois values.⁸⁷ The challenge for retail employers in the dry goods trades generally, and in department stores particularly, was that their experiments in store character depended heavily on the quality of service and salesmanship on offer. As one American department store retailer argued:

We can spend literally millions of dollars in merchandise investments; we can spend many more millions on display and merchandise presentation and advertising; we can spend unlimited energy and time in trying to influence people to think well of us—only to have it all go down the drain because of a surly sales clerk.⁸⁸

Indeed, multiple surveys of customer attitudes demonstrated that middle and upper-class women—the backbone of department store merchandising—rated the quality of service received second only to merchandise assortment as an indicator of their own store loyalties.⁸⁹

If it was the experience of being served that made shopping in department stores worth the extra cost at the till, this was equally as true for lower-middle- and working-class consumers as for traditional department store clientele. Aware that this was the case, the director of Harrods, Sir Richard Burbidge, advised

⁸⁶ Italics in original. 'DCT Summer School: Importance of Better Selling Emphasised,' *DR* (19 July 1952), 12-13.

⁸⁷ 'The Cultivation of Store Personality,' *Stores* 41 (May 1959), 16. 'An Image is a Multi-Faceted Thing,' *Stores* 46 (July-Aug. 1964), 12-15. Edward F. Engle, 'A Public Relations Program for the Retail Industry,' *Stores* 42 (July-Aug. 1960), 20-21, 24. J. Gordon Dakins, 'NRMA's Public Relations Program for Retailing' *Stores* 41 (May 1959), 5, 9. Robert Gur-Arie, 'Announcing NRMA's First Annual Retailing Serves America Commendation Award Competition,' *Stores* 43 (April 1961), 10-12. On the history of department store concern with image and public relations see, Leach, *Land of Desire*; Rappaport, 'Halls of Temptation,' 58-83.

⁸⁸ 'Image is a Multi-Faceted Thing,' 15. This argument was used repeatedly by both American and British department and dry goods store executives. 'Personnel in Distribution,' *DSE* 10 (April 1947), 21,34. 'From the Chairman's Office,' *Kenbar* 2 (Dec. 1951), 4, UGA, HF51/5/5/19. 'Fit For the Job?,' *CR* 39 (October 1965), 289-291. On efforts to mobilise employee loyalty for better public relations, Bert M. Sarazan, 'Our Relations Are Very Public,' *DSE* 12 (Dec. 1949), 62-63, 65. Robert J. Mayer, 'Public Relations For Retailers: Your Employee Public,' *Stores* 33 (April 1951), 40-41, 60. 'Public Relations,' *Stores* 34 (Feb. 1952), 28-29, 32. Nathan J. Gold, *Stores* 41 (June 1959), 11-12.

⁸⁹ 'The Department Store Through the Customer's Eyes,' *DSE* 19 (July 1956), 32-33, 60-61 and 19 (Sept. 1956), 36-37, 60-61. 'Why Retailers Need Public Relations Work,' *BNRDGA* 28 (Nov. 1946), 5-6. 'What Consumers Expect from Stores in a Defense Economy,' *Stores* 33 (July 1951), 17. 'Public Relations for Retailers, part 5, "Your Feminine Public,"' *Stores* 33 (July 1951), 40-41, 52.

buyers and managers in 1953 that ‘We must be nice in our willingness to help people even when we consider them to be of a lower class than we think it proper for Harrods to serve.’⁹⁰ Similarly, by 1964 the House of Fraser was seeking to cultivate an atmosphere of ‘classlessness, with the overlay of glamour’, in its stores where, because of polite service to all, ‘None are afraid to go inside.’⁹¹ Even at the most up-scale of British department stores then, it had become crucial in the post-war years to cultivate customer loyalties, even among less affluent consumers, through refined customer service.

Given that department store reputations depended so heavily on customer service, store managers sought to maintain customer loyalties to their stores through the construction of customer loyalties to individual salespeople. In both the US and Britain, managers gave their best salespeople nametags and business cards to help personalise the customer/salesperson interaction. In support of this practice one executive from Browns of Chester argued, ‘Staff, with advantage both to themselves and to the customer, could be “branded” just as much as the merchandise they handled.’⁹² Many stores, such as Lintz Department Stores in Dallas, Texas, encouraged salespeople to keep record cards for each customer and to contact regular customers by phone to offer frequent updates on the store’s new merchandise.⁹³ (See Figure 1.18.) And in 1948 many New York department stores, including Lord & Taylor, were still expanding their personal shopping services for customers who wished to have their shopping done for them or to be accompanied round the store.⁹⁴

Although the overall success reaped by personalised service in terms of customer loyalties is difficult to decipher, editors of staff magazines published frequent letters from customers demonstrating not only that shoppers remembered salespeople and other service employees by name, but that they also appreciated

⁹⁰ ‘Sir Richard Reviews the Years Trading: Our Future Policy,’ *HG* 38 (March 1953), 78-79.

⁹¹ Staff Guide, *The House of Fraser*, 1964, 10-11, HF1/8/3/2, UGA.

⁹² ‘Assistant Identification’ *DR* (8 Nov. 1952), 89. ‘Warrington Store “Identifies” Staff,’ *DR* (27 Dec. 1952), 30.

⁹³ Joseph E. Chastain, ‘Sales Promotion by Sales Personnel,’ *Stores* 44 (July-Aug. 1962), 53-54. ‘We Live By Selling,’ *HG* 44 (June 1959), 324; 44 (July 1959), 390. Staff guide, *How We Make Sales and Satisfy Customers: The Sales Policies and Practices of Marshall Field & Company*, 1954, 8-9, MFA.

⁹⁴ Miriam Dow Fuller, ‘Shopping Services Maintained by New York Stores,’ *DSE* 11 (Nov. 1948), 14. Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 88.

Figure 1.18. Customer record card

Name	<u>Jones, Mrs John R.</u>	Tel. No.	<u>4063</u>
Address	<u>110 West Blvd.</u>		
Remarks:	<i>Two children, Barbara, born 3/16/35, and James, born 9/18/37. Mr. Jones' birthday, 10/25. Likes to see anything new in accessories.</i>		

Donald K. Beckley and William B. Logan, *The Retail Salesperson at Work* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1948), 239.

the personalised service offered in person and by phone.⁹⁵ The critical importance of personalised service to the construction of new customer loyalties was made particularly clear in a letter from a staff member whose wife shopped at John Barker's in London:

Some ten months ago, my wife was walking through Barkers and, in passing through the men's tailoring department, introduced her friend to Mr. Rowden. A few days later the friend came in with her husband, who bought a suit. Since that time he has bought or ordered three more suits. His elder son has bought a suit. His younger son has bought an overcoat and a suit. His brother has bought a suit and his brother-in-law two suits. All resulting from one chance sale. What an illustration of the power of good salesmanship, backed up by good merchandise and multiplied by recommendation!

That is how "goodwill," that incalculable but vital asset of any firm, is built up.⁹⁶

The good salesmanship and personal service on which department stores relied for customer loyalties depended on employees' *functional loyalties*, and on their willingness to engage in the emotional labour customers expected.

While employee loyalties as expressed through personalised service were arguably most important for department stores, by mid-century dedicated employees were important in maintaining the consumer loyalties of chain store multiples as well. Although these shops appealed for the most part to a different, less affluent sector of the consumer market than department stores, chain store managers were nevertheless concerned with customer loyalties that depended not only on price and availability of merchandise, but on the entire shopping experience. If, as Nona Glazer has argued, rural, suburban and later urban consumers were to become willing to take on the additional work and responsibilities necessitated by self service in the 1940s and '50s, they would have to be rewarded with quicker, more efficient shopping transactions.⁹⁷ In this respect, the success of the post-war growth of self-selection and self-service in the

⁹⁵ Customer letters, *Kenbar* 2 (Jan. 1952), 11; *Kenbar* 2 (Feb. 1952), 18, 19. UGA, HF51/5/5/20-21. *Hide Group Weekly Bulletin* 143 (26 Aug. 1961), 436-437, UGA, HF29/6/1. 'Do You Sometimes Wonder. . . Is It Worth It?' *SC* 51 (Sept. 1960), 16. Most employee magazines had regular columns of letters from customers. For example, 'Salute the Staff,' *HG* 34 (June 1949), 125; 'Brickbats and Bouquets', *FG*; *Hide Group Weekly Bulletin*, HF29/6/1, UGA.

⁹⁶ 'Sales Snowball,' *The Kenbar* 1 (April 1950), 8, UGA, HF51/5/5/1. See also, 'Goodwill Gazette,' *Hide Group Weekly Bulletin*, 143 (26 Aug. 1961), HF29/6/1, UGA.

⁹⁷ Glazer, *Women's Paid and Unpaid Labor*, 100-105.

multiples depended on the support staff available to make the shopping experience as smooth and efficient as possible.

Despite the trend toward self-service, variety stores remained keenly aware of their reputations for customer service. In the upper-end multiples like JC Penney's and Sears in the US, sales assistants were available on the shop floor to offer the merchandise information, care instructions, or product comparisons shoppers needed in order to make choices they would be satisfied with once home. In the five-and-dime variety stores like J. J. Newberry's and later Wal-Mart in the US, Marks and Spencer's in Britain, and in Woolworth's stores across Britain and America, it would be the staff of cashiers who served as familiar faces for customers seeking to maintain some sense of familiarity and community in their shopping experiences. At mid-century, Woolworth's 'counter girls' constituted 80 per cent of the company's employees and helped to define the Woolworth's shopping experience.⁹⁸

Employee loyalties were not only important to the solicitation of customer loyalties on the shop floor, but outside the store as well. Both department and variety store employers were concerned about how employees represented their establishments to friends and relatives who might be potential customers or future employees. Retail managers were well aware that discontented employees were likely to vent their frustrations on friendly ears, and that this reputation—generated through communal gossip—was much more likely to influence customers' buying patterns than the reputations managers attempted to build through advertising and promotions. The reputations of shops in rural areas were particularly vulnerable to the same personal relationships between employees and customers that managers encouraged. Just as those personal connections could bring in new customers, so could such relationships work against a store's management if employees perceived that they were being mistreated or that the store took advantage of customers in some way, and passed those perceptions on to sympathetic friends or relatives. As one *Penney News* column advised readers, 'everything we do as employees reflects for good or bad on our employer whether it is during working hours or not.'⁹⁹ Managers at other stores, including Marshall

⁹⁸ 'Karen Plunkett-Powell, *Remembering Woolworth's: A Nostalgic History of the World's Most Famous Five-and-Dime* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1999), 219-224.

⁹⁹ 'All the Time,' *PN* 27 (July 1962), 8. Similarly, 'Criticism of the Partnership,' *GJLP* 35 (26 Sept. 1953), 482-483.

Field's in Chicago, John Barker's in London, and the British retail Co-operatives, encouraged shopworkers to be 'good ambassadors' for their stores, using their personal influence within and outwith the store to garner good business instead of poor reputations for employers.¹⁰⁰

By mid-century, department and variety store managers were keenly aware, not only that customer loyalties were deeply dependent on employee loyalties, but that employee loyalties were in turn directly correlated with the quality of shopfloor employee relations. As one American merchant argued at the end of the Second World War, a 'good employee relationship is a priceless, if intangible, asset to any business. To retailing it is infinitely so because no business depends so largely upon "firing line" individual contacts for its success.'¹⁰¹ Department and variety store merchants were continually reminded through their trade press that the maintenance of employee loyalties was a crucial precondition for the maintenance of customer loyalties under increasing business competition. In their on-going quest for the ever-elusive customer loyalties, retail employers adhered wholeheartedly to the principle illuminated by one JC Penney's manager in 1940: 'Loyalty is contagious; loyal employees make loyal customers.'¹⁰²

Selling Political and Ideological Agendas

The intensely public nature of retail employee relations politicised the complex and volatile correlation between employee and customer loyalties from the late-nineteenth century. In both Britain and America, middle- and upper-class women mobilised their economic and social power as consumers to lobby for improvement of shop working conditions in retail stores at the turn of the century. In Britain, concerned customers played a crucial role in shedding light on and bringing an end to the notoriously paternalistic living-in system present in both

¹⁰⁰ 'Talking It Up,' 2. 'Fifth Columnists?', *PD* 5 (Dec. 1940), 2. 'Good Ambassadors for Barkers,' *Kenbar* 3 (Dec. 1952), 9, UGA, HF51/5/5/26. 'Accentuate the Positive,' *FG* 17 (5 Dec. 1949), 1, 4. *Serving Our Members in Dry Goods Departments* (Manchester: Co-operative Union, 1955), 5, CA. R. A. Palmer, *What Does Co-operative Employment Mean to You?* (Manchester: Co-operative Union, 1933), 14, CA.

¹⁰¹ 'Spotlight on Store Personnel,' *DSE* 8 (Dec. 1945), 72-73.

¹⁰² 'Fifth Columnists?' 2.

small shops and larger stores.¹⁰³ In America, consumer advocacy through women's organisations such as the National Consumers' League and the Women's Trade Union League was important to securing legislation for improved working conditions in the early twentieth century. The support of women consumers in the political arena helped to provide, among other things, seats for saleswomen, shorter working hours and better ventilation.¹⁰⁴ Even as late as 1935 consumers still played a crucial role in the politicisation of department store employee relations in America. In that year a strike at Orbach's Department Store in New York City led upper- and middle-class women to form a new organisation, the League of Women Shoppers of New York, to lend support to striking workers through picketing and boycotts.¹⁰⁵ During the Second World War though, consumers' political interests in retail management shifted from labour conditions to focus more fully on customer-centred concerns over shop hours, prices, merchandise information, rationing and a full range of other specific issues in both America and Britain.¹⁰⁶

The shift from labour-centred to customer-centred consumer activism had complex ramifications for British and American retail employers. To begin with, the political issues that consumers had raised with regard to retail labour relations refused to go away, despite the decline in labour-oriented consumer activism. Turn-of-the-century activists had irretrievably brought retail labour conditions into a public, political realm, initiating debates over shop hours, wages and working conditions that would continue in Parliament and Congress, effecting new legislation through the 1960s. As labour costs constituted retailers' primary expenditure after merchandise, they guarded with a vengeance their private control over managerial budgets, vehemently resisting either local or national

¹⁰³ Lancaster, *The Department Store*, 132. Hosgood, 'Mercantile Monasteries,' 322-352. For more on living-in, including a description of personal experience, see P. C. Hoffman, *They Also Serve: The Story of the Shop Worker* (London: Porcupine Press, 1949), 18-66.

¹⁰⁴ Benson, *Counter Cultures* 134-137.

¹⁰⁵ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 35. 'Consider the Woolworth Workers,' *RWE* 3 (29 June 1940), 4, 16.

¹⁰⁶ Cohen, *Consumers' Republic*, 62-109. On rationing in WWII and after, see Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption, 1939-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Meg Jacobs, "'How About Some Meat?': The Office of Price Administration, Consumption Politics, and State Building from the Bottom Up, 1941-1946,' *Journal of American History* 84 (Dec. 1997), 910-941. Matthew Hilton, *Consumerism in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Search for a Historical Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003), 139-145.

government intervention. Until 1961, American retail organisations, including the National Retail Dry Goods Association (NRDGA), continually lobbied Congress to prevent inclusion of retail establishments under the wage/hour regulatory power of the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act.¹⁰⁷ In Britain, the Drapers' Chamber of Trade and regional retail employers' organisations had continually to lobby against further changes to earlier Shops Acts legislation, which set limitations on trading hours and allowed more strict state regulation of shop working conditions.¹⁰⁸

More to the point, customer concern over the living-in system in Britain and over wages and working conditions in the US helped the nascent trade unions of the late nineteenth century to muster the support they needed to enter the retail sector on permanent footing. With the rise of unions further strengthened by the New Deal in the US, and by the Second World War in both countries, retail managers of the 1940s and '50s were less concerned over the possibility that customers would interfere in employee relations, than that unions would use their new political power to force long-held debates over wages and hours into binding legislation. In effect, the political relationship between retailers, customers and shopworkers shifted in the post-war years, away from conflict over shop working conditions and toward merchant dependence on customer and employee loyalties for fending off retail unions.¹⁰⁹ (See Figure 1.19.)

In post-war Britain and America, employee and customer loyalties served much deeper ideological and political purposes as well. The political battles of the post-war years were not only about wages and hours; they were also about business taxes, rationing, price controls, public services and labour rights, and about the conflict between capitalism and socialism more broadly. This was in keeping with a long tradition of retail politics in both Britain and America, from at least the mid-nineteenth century. As William Leach has argued, the dynamics of

¹⁰⁷ Articles on the FLSA in retail trade journals were prolific, but the following are a sample: Representative Wingate H. Lucas, (Texas), 'The True Intent of the Wage-Hour Law,' *Stores* 12 (Aug. 1949), 18-19, 38, 40. 'The Minimum Wage in Retailing,' *JR* 24 (Feb. 1948), 1-5; 'On Minimum Wages in Retailing—and Elsewhere,' *JR* 25 (Summer 1949), 54-55, 63. George Plant, 'Federal Minimum Wages and the Retail Exemption,' *Stores* 37 (March 1955), 11-12. See also Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 134-136.

¹⁰⁸ For a history of the Shops Acts and trading hours regulation, see Sir William Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades: The History of USDAW* (Manchester: USDAW, c. 1979), 219-228.

¹⁰⁹ On the role of employee loyalty in keeping the internal relations of retail establishments out of the public spotlight in Victorian and Edwardian Britain, see Hosgood, 'Mercantile Monasteries,' 326-331.

Figure 1.19. Customer loyalties important as anti-unionism

Why, After 5 Weeks is The Emporium Still Picketed?

Pickets are still in front of The Emporium, and have been there now since the 26th of September. WHY ARE THESE PICKETS IN FRONT OF THE EMPORIUM? Because this store, and other members of the San Francisco Retailers' Council, refuse to concede to the Union 1100 on two matters . . .

1. A demand for compulsory membership in this Union on penalty of loss of job.
2. A demand for unreasonably high wages beyond the substantial increases previously offered and now in effect.

During the period of the strike so far, you members of the shopping public have shown your confidence in our position by ignoring the picket lines and continuing to patronize this struck store, and the members of the Council individually, and as a group, appreciate and are grateful for this evidence of your support on these questions.

This Union, we are told, threatens to continue this strike through the Holiday Season, with the hope of crippling The Emporium's business and thus force their Management to concede on these two issues. They also threaten, we understand, to spread this strike to other downtown retail stores.

The position of our group, and The Emporium, is unchanged. If the Union insists on continuing this unjustified and unreasonable strike, pickets may be in front of The Emporium all through the Holiday Season.

Your continuous support has been appreciated, and we again thank you.

When you are doing your Christmas shopping during November and December, may we urge you to give The Emporium your fullest patronage.

Their stocks are complete, their service is up to standard.

By patronizing The Emporium, you will do your part in showing that San Francisco will no longer tolerate the unfair efforts of these Union leaders and their advisers.

SAN FRANCISCO RETAILERS' COUNCIL

Robert S. Atkins, Inc.
C. H. Baker, Inc.
Barger's, Inc.
Bullock & Jones Co.
Burt's
Charles Brown & Sons
Chandler's
City of Paris
Cosgrave's
Davis Schonwasser
Federal Outfitting Co.
Feltman & Curme, Inc.
Foreman & Clark

Nally Gaffney, Inc.
Gallenkamp Stores Co.
Gump's
Hale Bros.
Hale's Mission Store
Hanan & Son, Inc.
Hastings
Lead's
H. Linbes & Co.
Livingston Bros., Inc.
I. Magnin & Co.
Joseph Magnin Co., Inc.
Frank More, Inc.
Moore, Ltd.

Nathan-Dohrmann
O'Connor, Moffatt & Co.
Oregon City Woolen Mills
Patrick, Moise-Klinkner Co.
Rauson & Co.
J. C. Penney Co.
Renschoffs
Raphael Weill & Company
(The White House)
Roor Bros., Inc.
Sears, Roebuck and Co.
Sherman, Clay & Co.
Sommer & Kaufmann
Frank Werne Co.

American political culture and the growth of consumer capitalism have long been intricately intertwined. From John Wanamaker's appointment as postmaster general in 1889 to the US Commerce Department's concern over customers returning sold goods to department stores in the late 1920s, American department store executives and selling processes were always deeply embedded in a broader political context.¹¹⁰ Likewise in Britain, consumption and retail businesses were explicitly politicised in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through many avenues, including the Co-operative Movement and Co-operative Party, consumer activism regarding prices and availability of food goods, even nationalist rhetoric of Victorian Scottish drapers.¹¹¹

In post-war America, the context of the Cold War rigidified the basic retail political agenda, while proffering new rhetorical and ideological tools with which retailers would fortify their arguments in defence and support of free enterprise. The politics of post-war American retail were broadly consistent with pre-war agendas, insofar as store executives and retail organisations such as the NRDGA continually lobbied for less government regulation of business practice, prices, consumer markets and labour relations.¹¹² The NRDGA consistently participated in the broader post-war business activist agenda, documented by Elizabeth Fones-Wolf and Howell John Harris, which was intended to dismantle the New Deal

¹¹⁰ On the politics of American retail up to WWII, see Leach, *Land of Desire*, examples from p. 192, 301. Forrest Crissey, *The Merchant and the New National Spirit* (Chicago, 1920). On the politicisation of American consumerism pre-WWII, see Charles McGovern, 'Consumption and Citizenship in the United States, 1900-1940,' in *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern and Matthias Judd (Washington, D.C., 1998), 37-58.

¹¹¹ On the history of Co-operation and Co-operative politics, see Gurney, *Co-operative Culture*. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *The Consumers' Co-operative Movement* (London: Longmans, Green, 1921). Carr-Saunders et al., *Consumers' Co-operation in Great Britain*. GDH Cole, *A Century of Co-operation* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1944). On the politicisation of British consumption, see Hilton, *Consumerism in Twentieth-Century Britain*. Matthew Hilton, 'The Fable of the Sheep, Or, Private Virtues, Public Vices: The Consumer Revolution of the Twentieth Century,' *Past & Present* 176 (Aug. 2002), 222-256. Noel Thompson, 'Social Opulence, Private Asceticism: Ideas of Consumption in Early Socialist Thought'; Martin Daunt, 'The Material Politics of Natural Monopoly: Consuming Gas in Victorian Britain'; Margot C. Finn, 'Scotch Drapers and the Politics of Modernity: Gender, Class and National Identity in the Victorian Tally Trade'; Frank Trentmann, 'Bread, Milk and Democracy: Consumption and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century Britain'; and Matthew Hilton, 'Consumer Politics in Post-war Britain,' in Martin Daunt and Matthew Hilton (Eds.), *The Politics of Consumption: Material Culture and Citizenship in Europe and America*, (Oxford: Berg, 2001). Benson, *Rise of Consumer Society*, 143-163.

¹¹² Lew Hahn, 'Price Control and Rationing After the War,' *BNRDGA* 26 (Jan. 1944), 11-13. Erwin D. Canham, 'The Challenge of Government Control,' *Stores* 42 (Jan. 1960), 14-16. John Hazen (VP of the NRMA Government Affairs Committee), 'The NRMA in Washington,' *Stores* 43 (Jan. 1961), 38-40.

State and reassert the hegemony of free enterprise in American political and economic life.¹¹³ However, the explicit politicisation of consumption during the Cold War offered retailers the political basis they needed to argue their own particular importance to the sustenance of American free enterprise, and American democracy in turn.¹¹⁴ To that end, one contributor to the American retail trade journal, *Department Store Economist*, argued in 1949, ‘We have finally concluded that selling merchandise is not enough, and that if we are to long survive, we must also sell the American way of life to those with whom we come in contact.’¹¹⁵ Long before Richard Nixon argued that he preferred washing machines to missiles as Cold War weapons in his 1959 ‘kitchen debate’ with Nikita Khrushchev, American retailers had helped to articulate a vision of America in which the consumer would become the champion of American democracy, with the retailer her right-hand man.¹¹⁶ (See Figure 1.20.)

Lizabeth Cohen has argued that the ‘citizen consumers’ of the New Deal era and the Second World War who were interested in mobilising the powers of government and consumer sacrifice to promote fairer distribution of wealth were eclipsed in the post-war years by the ‘purchaser as citizen’, who could simultaneously fulfil individual desires and patriotic obligations through the

¹¹³ Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise*. Howell John Harris, *The Right To Manage: Industrial Relations Policies of American Business in the 1940s* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982).

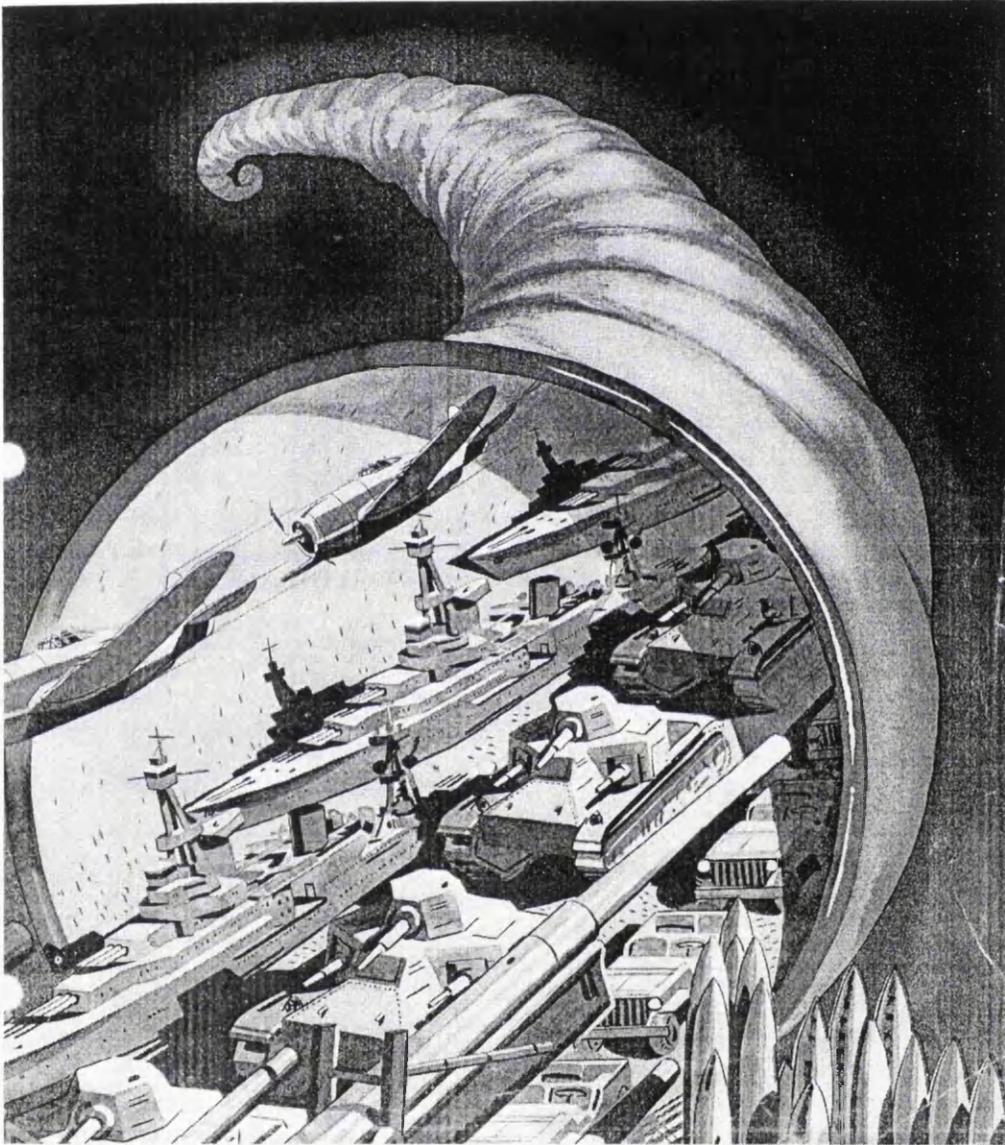
¹¹⁴ On the politics of Cold War consumerism, see Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (USA: Basic Books 1988), 16-20, 162-182. Emily Rosenberg, ‘Consuming Women: Images of Americanization in the “American Century,”’ in *Diplomatic History*, 23 (1999), 479-497.

¹¹⁵ ‘We Urge Every Retailer to Give This Their Wholehearted Support!’ *DSE* 12 (Jan. 1949), 122. On the NRDGA’s campaign to sell democracy and free choice, see *Saturday Evening Post*, Feb. 19 1949, 68-69. ‘We Retail Democracy,’ *Stores*, 30 (Sept. 1948), 51. ‘Here’s Your Public Relations Campaign,’ *Stores* 30 (Oct. 1948), 22-23. ‘Democracy Works Here,’ *Stores* 31 (March 1949), 14.

¹¹⁶ The gendered language is intentional, to reflect the gendered rhetoric of retail propaganda, in which consumers were generally represented as women and retailers as men. For example, see ‘Distribution—A Key to High Employment,’ *DSE* 8 (Nov. 1945), 186; and ‘The Job of Being a Customer,’ *Stores* 30 (Sept. 1948), 27, 67-68. For a full transcript of the ‘kitchen debate’, see Turner Learning, <http://www.turnerlearning.com/cnn/coldwar/sput_re4.html> (Feb. 18, 2003). On the place of retail in the Cold War, see NRDGA, *Dynamic Retailing in the Modern Economy: The Role of Retailing in Distributing the Nation’s Productive Capacity* (NRDGA, 1954). Similar rhetoric pervaded retail trade journal articles, of which the following are a sample: ‘Communist Infiltration in the United States: Its Nature and How to Combat It,’ *DSE* 9 (Nov. 1946), 178. ‘Wm. S. Street Says, “Believe in America”’, *DSE* 10 (Feb. 1947), 168. ‘Democracy in Crisis,’ *Stores* 40 (July-Aug. 1958), 12-13. ‘The Free Economy, the “Full” Life, And a Citizen’s Responsibilities,’ *Stores* 42 (May 1960), 6-7. ‘Government, Politics, and the Merchant,’ *Stores*, 44 (May 1962), 3,6-7.

Figure 1.20. Consumerism: The root of American military strength

THE **Bulletin** NOVEMBER 1942
THE NATIONAL RETAIL DRY GOODS ASSOCIATION



This cover symbolised the rhetoric of American retailers who emphasised their role in selling the cornucopia of goods that would keep the American economy—and in turn its military—afloat during the Second World War. In the post-war years goods themselves became metaphorical weapons in the Cold War culture wars.

Bulletin of the National Retail Dry Goods Association 24 (Nov. 1942), front page.

everyday rituals of consumption.¹¹⁷ This reorientation in American consumer politics was mirrored by a shift in retail propaganda, from a focus on evading or deflecting customer criticism, to convincing consumers of the role they could play in furthering American democracy simply by consuming more goods. Indeed, not only goods, but the very *idea* of consumption as the key to employment and economic prosperity—a basic Keynesian principle that would become fundamental to post-war government and business policy—had to be sold to consumers themselves. From the sale of war savings bonds during the Second World War to the sale of goods to customers cashing in on those bonds during the Cold War, *ideologically loyal* salespeople could help convince customers that their purchases—rather than their savings—helped to fuel the American economy and national defence.¹¹⁸ As one retailer advocated, ‘Every housewife should be brought to conscious recognition that the man who invites her to buy is engaged in the effort to make more sure her husband’s job and his continued ability to provide for her and her children.’¹¹⁹ Who better to do that than the salesperson daily in contact with the customer?

In addition to the importance of shopworkers’ *ideological loyalties* for selling ‘American dreams’ and business political agendas, shopworkers’ *functional loyalties* were also important in convincing the government and the public that retail businesses were the pillars of American economic strength. In their efforts to avert recurrence of the economic hardships of the 1930s and protect America’s system of consumer capitalism against ideological assailants, the NRDGA and other retail organisations reconceptualized the Depression as a period plagued not so much by overproduction as by ‘underselling’. As one merchant put it, ‘Production, without aggressive and sound selling, is as futile as a hen on a china egg.’¹²⁰ With the perspective of recent history to guide them, retail activists offered in place of the production-driven economy of the past a newly-

¹¹⁷ Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic*. See also Lizabeth Cohen, ‘The New Deal State and the Making of Citizen Consumers,’ in Strasser et al, *Getting and Spending*, 111-25; and Lizabeth Cohen, ‘Citizens and Consumers in the United States in the Century of Mass Consumption,’ in *The Politics of Consumption*, 203-21.

¹¹⁸ On War Savings Bond sales, see ‘Sell Bonds and You Sell Your Store,’ *BNRDGA* 24 (July 1942), 11-12, 53. Lawrence, *Pledging Allegiance*. Carol H. Welsh, ‘“Back the Attack”: The Sale of War Bonds in Oklahoma,’ *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 61:3 (1983), 226-245.

¹¹⁹ ‘Pave the Way Now for Tomorrow’s Salesman!’ *BNRDGA*, 26 (Dec. 1944), 20.

¹²⁰ ‘The Postwar Job in One Word—Selling,’ *BNRDGA* 26 (Sept. 1944), 16-18. For more on the Depression as a period of underconsumption, see Meg Jacobs, ‘The Politics of Plenty in the Twentieth-Century United States’ in *The Politics of Consumption*, 223-239, pp. 232-33.

formulated rubric for economic policy that would privilege selling as ‘the key to jobs’, the key to protecting production workers from the redundancy caused by overproduction and underconsumption.¹²¹ In turn, salespeople would be responsible for oiling the wheels of production with good salesmanship—salesmanship that would keep merchandise moving off the shelves and keep consumer identities invested in a nexus of social and political meanings defined by material culture.¹²²

In Britain, many mainstream retailers, such as Sir Richard Burbidge of Harrods, Sir Hugh Fraser of the House of Fraser, John Spedan Lewis of the John Lewis Partnership, and J. Edward Sieff of Marks & Spencer’s similarly argued the importance of retail to the post-war British national economy. However, the political discourses with which they engaged were not only those of the Cold War and anti-Communism, but also those concerned with Britain’s economic place in the world during de-colonisation. The political line of British dry goods retailers was not as singular as that in America. Many major contributors—Harrods, the House of Fraser, Marks and Spencer’s, the Co-operatives and the John Lewis Partnership—agreed on the basic premise that retail would be fundamental to shoring up the British economy and British industry in a period of relative economic decline. However, each proposed that their business model could best serve Britain’s economic and political needs. For example, Harrods emphasised its potential to increase Britain’s exports through sales to foreign tourists, while Marks & Spencer’s played up its role as a distributor of British-made goods.¹²³

Two of Britain’s major retail institutions were distinct in the business models they set forward as the solution to Britain’s economic problems: the John Lewis Partnership and the Co-operative movement. For the John Lewis Partnership, the Cold War and Britain’s economic struggles did not begin after the Second World War. They started when John Spedan Lewis recognised the

¹²¹ ‘Distribution—A Key to High Employment,’ 186. ‘The American Way *Can* Be Destroyed!’ *Stores* 29 (Aug. 1947), 21.

¹²² ‘Problem the First—To Rehabilitate Salesmanship for Its Peacetime Job,’ *BNRDGA* 25 (Sept. 1943), 19-20, 36, 38, 42. ‘Selling is the Key to Jobs,’ *BNRDGA* 26 (Oct. 1944), 7, 10-11.

‘American Merchants Must Train Eight Million Sales People!’ *DSE* 7 (Aug. 1944), 57, 62-63.

‘Distribution—A Key to Prosperity,’ *DSE* 7 (Dec. 1944), 66, 68-69, 72. ‘Distribution—A Key to High Employment,’ 186.

¹²³ On Harrods and exports, see ‘Devaluation and Us,’ *HG* 34 (Nov. 1949), ii. On Marks & Spencer’s, see ‘Ninety-nine Per Cent of our Goods Now British-Made,’ *SMN* (25 Feb. 1955), 1. See also, ‘Sir Richard Describes the Services Rendered by the Retail Trade to the Public,’ *HG* 37 (Feb. 1952), 39. ‘Editorial,’ *In Company* 2 (Winter 1959 to Spring 1960), ii, UGA, HF1/8/1/1/1.

potential for Communism in the socio-economic conditions immediately preceding and following the First World War. Lewis was deeply concerned with the social inequality of the early twentieth century, not least in his father's department store where he, his father and brother drew more through their salaries and interest on capital than all of the other employees combined.¹²⁴ He saw in such social inequality a recipe for political upheaval, and believed that British business could lead the way toward reforming private capitalism, rather than continuing what he assumed to be a self-destructive course. So, in 1914, when Lewis's father granted him controlling interest of Peter Jones department store in Chelsea, he set about reorganising the political and economic framework of the business to fit his vision of 'producer cooperation', which he later described as follows:

Producer-cooperation may perhaps be defined to be profit-seeking enterprise upon the independent initiative of two or more persons without any exploitation of some by others, so that all of the workers, managers and managed alike, will be sharing fairly, that is to say as equally as is really possible, all of the advantages of ownership.¹²⁵

When the senior Lewis passed away in 1928, his son reorganised the Oxford Street store as well, and in so doing set the foundations for the Partnership.¹²⁶

The Partnership was never intended to be just another business model, but an endeavour with major ramifications for the ideological underpinnings of the British political economy. From its beginnings, the Partnership model was a top-down implementation of industrial democracy, intended not to be an alternative to capitalism, but a revision thereof. Lewis aspired for it to rein in the most egregious excesses of private enterprise, while maintaining the basic incentives that fuelled entrepreneurial ingenuity. But it was more than just an economic experiment. Lewis strongly believed that business was not a world unto its own, but a crucial and integrated sector of a broader political economy. Accordingly, industrial democracy in the Partnership was not simply an end in itself, but the means for bringing the strength of British democracy to bear on industrial relations. Hence the emphasis on 'free speech' through the Partnership's

¹²⁴ Allan Flanders, Ruth Pomeranz and Joan Woodward, *Experiment in Industrial Democracy*, London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1968, 44.

¹²⁵ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares* (London: Staples Press Ltd, 1954), 25-27.

¹²⁶ Lewis, *Partnership For All*, 3-56.

journalism; the construction of a Central Council which merged the two Houses of the Parliamentary model into one partially-elected, partially-appointed decision-making body; the ratification of a Partnership Constitution in 1950; and Lewis's self-appointment as 'constitutional monarch'.¹²⁷

Britain's post-war economic struggles and the Cold War offered Lewis the discursive strategies and political framework he needed to argue the potential of the Partnership model to government, business leaders and the public. Lewis continually argued that Britain's post-war productive capacity would only be fully realised with a model of corporate governance that encouraged workers and managers, as owners of their own business, to plough more of the profits back into business to fuel higher productivity and higher profits in turn.¹²⁸ Accordingly, he expected that 'an ideally sensible body of Partners would pinch and scrape in their private lives rather than slow down the financing of their own business.'¹²⁹ Ideally, the three pillars of the Partnership—power-sharing, profit-sharing and knowledge-sharing—would help to cultivate in Partners both *ideological* and *functional loyalties* and the willingness to make such sacrifice.

Following the Second World War Lewis consistently maintained that this 'middle way' voluntarist model of collective ownership and worker control was, 'A possible advance in civilisation and perhaps the only alternative to Communism'.¹³⁰ In his attempt to identify and undermine the feelings among workers that would give rise to Communism, Lewis argued that 'the supreme problem is not satisfaction of material appetites but prevention of a galling sense of needless inferiority of any kind and above all the sense of being exploited,

¹²⁷ On 'free speech', see cover page, *GJLP* 35 (12 Dec. 1953), 665; *The John Lewis Partnership Chronicle for Bon Marché* 1 (22 Sept. 1947), 1. On the Central Council, see *The John Lewis Partnership Partners' Handbook*, 1951, 21-22, JLPA. Flanders et al., *Experiment in Industrial Democracy*, 54-69, esp. 54-56. Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, 135-150, 224-25. For the Constitution, see Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, 222-229. On the Chief Executive as 'constitutional monarch', see Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, 99-129.

¹²⁸ Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, 3-22, esp. 4-5.

¹²⁹ This was in response to debates in the Partnership regarding wage freezes in the late 1940s and early '50s. 'Pay-Rates,' *GJLP* 31 (26 Nov. 1949), 514. 'Ruinously Impatient Discontent,' *GJLP* 31 (5 March 1949), 51-52. 'This Year's Budget: No Pay Cut Yet Awhile,' *GJLP* 34 (5 April 1952), 122; 'Adjustment of Expenses to the Present Outlook,' *GJLP* 34 (28 June 1952), 269-273; 'The General Decrease,' *GJLP* 34 (26 July 1952), 335. 'Pay-Rates and the Cost of Living,' *GJLP* 36 (25 Sept. 1954), 25. A letter from a Partner suggesting more sacrifice for the Partnership: 'Now Then, Partners!' *GJLP* 32 (29 July 1950), 306. 'Benefit or Pay?' *GJLP* 32 (1 April 1950), 103-104. 'We Must Have Eight Per Cent. Benefit,' *GJLP* 32 (18 March 1950), 78-79. On the correlation between wages and production in the Partnership, see Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, 28-29.

¹³⁰ Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, iii.

victimised, for somebody else's benefit.'¹³¹ Lewis firmly believed that by building a business model reflective of the British political system, in which managers and employees shared power and profits, the Partnership had undermined such sentiment. The challenge, however, was not just to satiate workers emotionally or materially, but to secure Partners' *ideological loyalties* to the politics of the Partnership model in a way that would translate into the *functional loyalties* necessary to help fulfil the model's economic and political potential. As Lewis argued, the Partnership's ability to live up to its potential depended on there being 'a sufficient proportion of the members of the Partnership [who] take as a general rule some real trouble to understand its real responsibilities and to make it what it can and should be'.¹³²

The political and ideological agenda of the British Co-operative movement in the post-war years was less explicitly concerned with the discursive strategies enabled by Cold War tensions, but still fit easily with a British 'middle way' philosophy. Like the John Lewis Partnership, the Co-operative movement offered a voluntarist model of retail business with strong historical precedent, dating back to the Rochdale Pioneers of 1844. The main difference was that whereas the Partnership was concerned to apply the rigours and values of British democracy to industrial relations, the Co-operative movement focused on democratic ownership and direction of retail business by consumers.¹³³ In 1921, Sidney and Beatrice Webb described the movement as 'a democracy comparable in magnitude and importance with either Trade Unionism or Local Government'.¹³⁴ It was in this capacity as a democratic model of private enterprise fit to take its part along side other British democratic institutions that the movement's leaders and political activists articulated the importance of the Co-operative model to post-war British politics.

The Co-operative movement's leaders were particularly concerned to stake out their position vis-à-vis the Labour Party, with its alternative vision of socialism, most notably expressed in the Party's proposals to nationalise

¹³¹ Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, 12.

¹³² 'Is the Partnership Becoming A Robot?' *GJLP* 33 (17 Nov. 1951), 546. 'Real Partnership,' *GJLP* 35 (11 July 1953), 341.

¹³³ For further comparison of the Partnership and Co-operatives, see Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, 82-84; and John Lukens, 'What Can We Learn From the Co-ops?' I – VI, *GJLP* 40 (25 Oct. – 29 Nov. 1958), 899-901, 926-927, 953-954, 980-981, 1004-1005, 1027, 1029.

distribution in the early 1950s.¹³⁵ Like the Partnership, the Co-operative movement sought to avoid nationalisation and sought tax protection from the State to promote and protect alternative private sector models, and to rival capitalist business.¹³⁶ Defending this principle to the Labour Party conference in 1962, Jack Bailey, Secretary of the Co-operative Party warned, 'A defeat for Co-operation is a defeat for democracy.'¹³⁷ In 1974, a Co-operative Party pamphlet clearly set out what had been an idealised relationship between the movement and the Labour Party since at least the Labour government's 1945-51 tenure:

If the Labour Movement were to move in this kind of way in the direction of what can be called an Owenite or co-operative interpretation of socialism it would help the Labour Party to make its socialism an electoral asset instead of an electoral liability by helping to demolish the myth that socialism means the nationalisation of everything and to identify socialism with the diffusion of power among the people instead of with its concentration in the hands of the state.¹³⁸

Although the relationship between the movement and the Labour Party was largely one to be negotiated by the Co-operative Party and movement leaders, employees of retail societies had their party to play by proving the viability of Co-operative democracy in an intensely competitive retail market.

In 1929, long-time Co-operative employee T. W. Mercer argued that Co-operative retail employees were 'Servants of Democracy'.¹³⁹ Thus, the employee's position and role in the retail society was distinct from that of a shopworker in a capitalist enterprise. Mercer contended that:

Democracy as a working system is a system still on trial. All mankind are not believers in it yet, and about the superiority of co-operative over capitalist forms of organisation many good people still have doubts. In the economic conflict between the two systems, Co-operation and Capitalism, that is proceeding now, *Co-operation*

¹³⁴ Webb, *Consumers' Co-operative Movement*, vi. For more on the democratic control of Co-operatives, see Carr-Saunders, et al. *Consumers' Co-operation*, 247-299.

¹³⁵ 'Conventional Ideas of Public Ownership,' *CN* 4119 (13 May 1950), 1. 'Home Rule,' *CR* 27 (Feb. 1953), 49-50.

¹³⁶ Bert Oram, *Body and Soul: An Assessment of the Modern Purpose of the Co-operative Movement* (London: Co-operative Printing Society, 1962), 11-12. Paul Derrick, 'Co-operative Co-partnership,' *ND* 9 (16 July 1955), 437-438. Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, 81.

¹³⁷ 'Co-operation's Role as a Social Force,' *CR* 36 (Oct. 1962), 312.

¹³⁸ Co-operative Party, *Industrial Democracy and Social Ownership* (London: Co-operative Union Ltd., 1974), 22. See also Oram, *Body and Soul*, 17-23. For more on the Co-operative/Labour relationship and debates with regard to socialism, see Gurney, *Co-operative Culture*, 169-192, 228-231.

¹³⁹ T. W. Mercer, *Servants of Democracy: Reflections on Co-operative Employment and Co-operative Employees* (Manchester: Co-operative Union, 1929).

*cannot be victorious if co-operative employees are not fully conscious of their responsibilities and alert to make its victory sure.*¹⁴⁰

Already aware of the growing competition faced by Co-operative retail societies in the inter-war period, Mercer argued that ‘The “extra bit” of service enlightened employees can give may, in the long run, prove to be the deciding factor—the factor that will enable the whole Co-operative Movement to overcome the competition of multiple shop companies, monopolies, and trusts.’¹⁴¹ In the post-war years it became even more clear that the Co-operative movement’s social and political power rested on its ability to compete economically in an open market. Peter Gurney has noted that the ‘crisis’ of decline in the Co-ops was an extended one with origins in the 1920s.¹⁴² However, even into the 1960s many in the movement remained optimistic that the ideals of Co-operation could compete with capitalist price-cutting for customer loyalties if customers could just be sold on those ideals. In the post-war period, as in Mercer’s day, the function of the *ideologically* and *functionally loyal* Co-operative shopworker was to sell the values of Co-operation to the non-member customer, and to promote the value and quality of Co-operative produced goods and services ahead of those produced by capitalist industry.¹⁴³

In sum, both American and British dry goods retailers looked to their employees for assistance selling their political and economic agendas to the consuming public. Employees’ *ideological loyalties* to those agendas and the values behind them could be important in their own right. This was the case in the Co-ops where movement leaders expected employees to be committed enough to Co-operative principles and politics to sell their agenda to potential members, or to re-invigorate the loyalty of existing members. However, *ideological loyalties* were rarely this explicitly expressed. Although American retailers expected employees to talk up the political importance of war savings bonds with customers during WWII, it is hard to believe that they actually expected employees to talk Cold War ideology with their customers following the war. Rather, the point of *ideological loyalties* in the post-war period was to help fuel

¹⁴⁰ Italics in original. Mercer, *Servants of Democracy*, 20.

¹⁴¹ Mercer, *Servants of Democracy*, 22-23. See also R. A. Palmer, *Employment in Co-operative Service* (Manchester: Co-operative Union, 1932), esp. 6-8.

¹⁴² Gurney, *Co-operative Culture*, 226-238.

¹⁴³ *Serving Our Members*, 4.

functional loyalties by making shop work seem of national, even international importance. It was shopworkers' *functional loyalties* on which retail employers relied most, not just for raising productivity, but for proving the viability of various models of business or industrial relations in a way that would bring political favour to the retail trade in general, or to one company in particular.

A Theoretical Framework for Understanding Employee Loyalties

Employee loyalties served many different purposes in the British and American retail trades in the mid-twentieth century. Retail managers needed to create and maintain *fundamental* interpersonal and company loyalties to keep shopworkers in their employ. *Functional loyalties* went beyond that, insofar as employees were central to managerial attempts to fuel higher productivity, cultivate customer loyalties, bolster public relations, inhibit unionisation and protect the business political agenda. *Ideological loyalties* were important in their own right, if employees were to support the business political agenda in their working and personal lives, but they were also important for fuelling *functional loyalties*. This chapter has examined department and variety store employers' needs for these loyalties. The next two chapters will develop this analysis by looking at the range of managerial techniques British and American store managers deployed in order to solicit various loyalties from employees. These managerial techniques and employee loyalties can best be understood within the following historical and theoretical framework.

The period between 1940 and 1970 is a useful one for the historical study of employee loyalties in retail precisely because the managerial technologies used by store managers in their attempts to construct employee loyalties were in great flux at that time. At mid-century, British and American retail managers, like their counterparts in industry, were caught in the midst of a generational shift in managerial technique. This period was in many ways a bridge or transition from the paternalistic 'old' managerial style of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, which will be the focus of Chapter Two, to a 'new' managerial style defined by professionalism, human relations and teamwork in the late twentieth century, which will be the focus of Chapter Three. In many ways these latter methods of management were the progeny of paternalism, never entirely eclipsing paternalist rhetoric and practice, but building on it in ways that would maintain

the hegemony of managerial prerogative while engaging—however superficially—an expanding discourse of industrial democracy. In British and American department and variety stores at mid-century, an underlying ethic of paternalism pervaded company rhetoric, activities and benefits programmes, not in conflict, but in congruence with a new discourse of professionalism and human relations emerging in the early post-war years. Consequently, industrial relations in retail were characterised by both stasis and change in the 1940s, '50s and '60s, as department and variety store managers sought to balance traditional managerial control with increasing awareness of the social and psychological needs of employees.

The works of Albert Hirschman and Alan Fox provide a framework and vocabulary through which employee loyalties might be broadly dissected, analysed and understood under both 'old' and 'new' managerial styles.¹⁴⁴ Hirschman described the intersection of 'exit', 'voice' and 'loyalty' in a variety of organisational settings from politics to business. He argued that the significance of loyalty to organisational leaders is the degree to which it decreases the likelihood of a member leaving that organisation, even when unfavourable conditions make 'exit' seem the most advantageous option.¹⁴⁵ Exit, in the form of labour turnover, was one of the root causes of other significant labour problems in retail insofar as turnover necessitated better recruitment and deterred long-term development of skill in salesmanship. Consequently, various managerial strategies were valuable to retail managers to the extent that they heightened employees' *fundamental loyalties*, and in turn lengthened the average tenure of employment for shopfloor workers.

Hirschman argued that exit would be deferred if any of the following three conditions were met. The first condition would be any situation where exit was impossible given the lack of any competitive alternative organisation, as in the case of tyrannical states.¹⁴⁶ Needless to say, this was not the condition under which shopworkers laboured in either Britain or America where one store of employment could be easily enough substituted for another. In fact, the basic

¹⁴⁴ Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1970. Alan Fox, *Industrial Sociology and Industrial Relations* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1966).

¹⁴⁵ Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*, 76-80.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

similarities in managerial style from one store to the next and the multiplicity of organisational alternatives to employment in a certain firm go a long way toward explaining retail managers' concerted efforts to solicit employee loyalties. As Hirschman argued, 'loyalty is at its most functional when it looks most irrational, when loyalty means strong attachment to an organization that does not seem to warrant such attachment because it is so much like another one that is also available.'¹⁴⁷

The second condition for delay of exit would be an organisational dynamic with explicit or implicit penalties for exit. Hirschman contended that 'the penalty may be directly imposed, but in most cases it is internalized. The individual feels that leaving a certain group carries a high price with it, even though no specific sanction is imposed by the group.'¹⁴⁸ This is precisely where *fundamental loyalties* to employer, company and colleagues factored into the equation for retail managers. Managers were acutely aware that employees would be less likely to leave their firms and more likely to work toward the goals of the firm when those employees had friendships, communities, and lifestyles invested in their work in one particular store.

Under the third condition, delay of exit and growth of *functional loyalties* depend on the extent to which members of an organisation believe they can exercise 'voice' to instigate change and improvement.¹⁴⁹ In the framework of Hirschman's theory, employees' *functional loyalties* would be more forthcoming, and exit less likely when the processes of employee participation in business management were facilitated either formally by systems of representation and feedback, or informally through a close-knit company culture. Department and variety store managers were increasingly aware of this phenomenon, and many of the managerial techniques employed by store directors to secure employee loyalties throughout the twentieth century focused on improving communication between shop floor workers and their managers, and on investing employees in the betterment of their company.

However, while retail managerial strategies were intended to heighten employees' *beliefs* that their voices were influential, the extent to which such

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

strategies allowed employees any real influence in retail management differed from store to store. In many stores, both old and new managerial strategies allowed employees to participate in business management in tangential ways, while maintaining the foremost managerial prerogative for owners and directors. As Hirschman argued,

Loyalty-promoting institutions and devices are not only uninterested in stimulating voice at the expense of exit: indeed they are often meant to *repress* voice alongside exit. While feedback through exit or voice is in the long-run interest of organization managers, their short-run interest is to entrench themselves and to enhance their freedom to act as they wish, unmolested as far as possible by either desertions *or* complaints of members.¹⁵⁰

Right-to-manage sentiments were common among retail executives at mid-century as they repudiated external influence over managerial custom. The ongoing, underlying challenge for managers then, was to maintain the viability of technologies of voice through which employee loyalties could expand and develop, while sustaining the power of managerial prerogative. In effect, there were always limits on the extent to which the power of voice could be exercised through various systems of upward and downward communication. One measure of these limits was the narrow range of company goals and policies that could actually be influenced by employee participation.

Hirschman's scepticism about the unwillingness of those at the top of any loyalty-seeking organisation to negotiate control coheres well with the critiques made of business management by British and American labour historians. In the forefront of such critiques has been British labour sociologist Alan Fox's analysis of 'unitary' and 'pluralistic' systems of labour management in the 1960s. He defined the 'unitary system' of management as one which 'has one source of authority and one focus of loyalty' and deemed it the system most common in employer approaches to industrial relations at mid century. In the unitary system as defined by Fox, employees are meant to behave as team-mates, as they

strive jointly towards a common objective, each pulling his weight to the best of his ability. Each accepts his place and his function gladly, following the leadership of the one so appointed. There are no oppositionary groups or factions, and therefore no rival leaders within the team. Nor are there any outside it; the team stands alone, its members owing allegiance to their leaders but to no others. If the

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

members have an obligation of loyalty towards the leader, the obligation is certainly reciprocated, for it is the duty of the leader to act in such ways as to inspire the loyalty he demands. Morale and success are closely connected and rest heavily upon personal relationships.¹⁵¹

Three concepts in this definition are crucial to analysis of managerial attempts to solicit employee loyalties in retail: first, the idea that the structure of the workplace community under a unitary system of management allows for no significant dissent or rival loyalty to alter the framework of managerial prerogative, lest the system itself disintegrate; secondly, the notion that a sentiment of reciprocity is essential to the maintenance of intra-structural loyalties; and finally the assertion that interpersonal relationships are the foundation on which unitary managerial systems depend for their success. These three themes—the subordination of rival loyalties or dissent, the attempts at reciprocity between employees and employers, and the nurturing of personal relationships among employees and between employees and management—were elements central to managerial strategies in retail from the nineteenth century through the twentieth.

In sum, Albert Hirschman's theory of exit, voice and loyalty helps to explain the function of employee loyalties for a trade plagued by high labour turnover and by a relative lack of long-term employee investment in the goals of retail management. Alan Fox's concept of unitary systems of management supplements Hirschman's analysis by dissecting the mechanics of institutional loyalty and identifying the basic interpersonal dynamics and power relations on which employee loyalties have been built. The intent of the present investigation then, is threefold. The first task is to analyse in various retail managerial strategies the role of interpersonal relationships, reciprocity, and the subordination of rival loyalties as crucial factors for the construction of a real or rhetorical community on which *fundamental loyalties* depended. The second aim is to identify in both 'old' and 'new' managerial styles the necessary factors for the construction of *functional loyalties*: namely, the presence of managerial technologies meant to discourage exit, encourage voice, and maximise employee investment in the fulfilment of institutional goals. The third goal is to identify in employers' solicitation of employees' *fundamental* and *functional loyalties* the

¹⁵¹ Fox, *Industrial Sociology*, 3.

moral and patriotic undertones which helped to bolster *ideological loyalties*. The emphasis throughout will be on the ever-shifting balance among the basic elements of employee loyalties, and on the expression of these underlying elements in both rhetoric and practice.

Chapter Two

'In the Family': The Persistence of Paternalism

The dynamics of paternalism in British and American retail throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were always deeply embedded in the larger industrial context. In effect, the historiography of industrial paternalism sets a theoretical and comparative framework through which retail paternalism can be analysed. The historical literature on employer paternalism in industry is prolific, pervading company histories, labour histories, and histories of eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth-century managerial style in many countries.¹ In this chronologically and internationally diverse collection of work, historians have struggled to understand the functions of paternalist rhetoric and practice in the employment relationship, and the extent to which employer paternalism elicited deferential adherence to managerial prerogative on the part of employees. However, this common theme in the study of industrial paternalism has elided some awkward disjunctures in the historiography. As Harriet Bradley has argued, historians have attributed the rise of employer paternalism to various periods from the eighteenth century (E. P. Thompson) to the Victorian era (Patrick Joyce, Stuart Brandes) to the inter-war period (David Brody), just as they have located the demise of industrial paternalism in the 1850s (David Roberts), the 1930s (Brody, Brandes, Lizabeth Cohen) and the late 20th century (Sanford Jacoby).²

¹ Key texts for the US: David Brody, 'The Rise and Decline of Welfare Capitalism' in David Brody, *Workers in Industrial America: Essays on the 20th Century Struggle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 48-81; Stuart D. Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism, 1880-1940* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Andrea Tone, *The Business of Benevolence: Industrial Paternalism in Progressive America* (London: Cornell University Press, 1997); Nikki Mandell, *The Corporation as Family: The Gendering of Corporate Welfare, 1890-1930* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Sanford M. Jacoby, *Modern Manors: Welfare Capitalism Since the New Deal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Gerald Zahavi, *Workers, Managers, and Welfare Capitalism: The Shoeworkers and Tanners of Endicott Johnson, 1890-1950* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988). Key text for Britain: Patrick Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: The Culture of the Factory in Latter Victorian England*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1980). For an international perspective, see 'Patronage, Paternalism, and Company Welfare', special issue of *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 53 (Spring 1998).

² Harriet Bradley, 'Change and Continuity in History and Sociology: The Case of Industrial Paternalism', in Stephen Kendrick, Pat Straw and David McCrone (Eds.), *Interpreting the Past, Understanding the Present* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 177-195. See also Walter Licht, 'Fringe Benefits: A Review Essay on the American Workplace,' *International Labour and Working-Class History* 53 (Spring 1998), 164-178.

Bradley attributes the discursive disjunctures in the history of industrial paternalism to the temptation on the part of historians to focus on novelty and change in a single period without properly acknowledging continuity and tradition. To analyse these degrees of continuity and change in managerial patterns, she has delineated a typology of paternalism, defining four dominant paternalist prototypes. The first of these phases was the 'classic paternalism' of the 18th and early 19th centuries, which stemmed from a community-oriented 'moral economy'. In this phase employers took responsibility for the well-being of their employees outside the workplace, and provided for their moral and social development in ways that reinforced the mutually dependent bonds between employees and their employers.³ The second phase, or 'factory paternalism', which emerged in the late 19th century, focused less on the employee's physical and moral needs outside the workplace than on the social and emotional environment of the firm. Bradley suggests that the shift from the first to the second phase of industrial paternalism implied a shift away from provision of housing and other material necessities on an individual basis, toward provision of collective services like sports clubs, excursions and parties.⁴

Bradley has argued that in the inter-war years the breakdown of family firms—and the related mergers, take-overs and branch constructions that marked the 'progress of bureaucratic development'—led to a new phase of 'neo-paternalism'. Industrial managers under this new phase of paternalism implemented new benefits like canteens and pensioners' clubs to replace benefits that had been made redundant by new government provision or by economic pressures on profit margins. Under this new manifestation of paternalism, industrial managers were concerned that bureaucratic growth had made tenuous the interpersonal reciprocity on which 'classic' and 'factory paternalism' had depended. Consequently, Bradley has asserted, industrial managers sought to restore the lines of communication between employees and employers through the publication of house journals, the implementation of suggestion schemes and the constitution of employee advisory committees.⁵

³ *Ibid.*, 183-185.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 185-186.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 186-187.

The exact opposite of neo-paternalism—where managerially-constructed systems of communication compensated for the diffusion of personal relationships—was ‘pseudo-paternalism’, the fourth manifestation of industrial paternalism in Bradley’s typology. This manifestation was not historically specific, but has been characteristic of smaller firms which could not afford to provide practical benefits for their employees, but which had the advantage of close interpersonal relationships between employees and employers. In effect, ‘pseudo-paternalism’ has relied entirely on the rhetoric of community, and on close intra-structural communications and relationships. Crucially, Bradley argued that each of these paternalist systems of benefits and services hinged on the viability of a company-as-family metaphor that pervaded corporate culture.⁶

Bradley’s typology of industrial paternalism provides a framework through which to understand the striking similarities in retail and industrial managerial style, and the similar ways manufacturing and service employers attempted to recruit and maintain employee loyalties over time. First, the metaphorical use of family imagery that, according to Bradley, underpinned industrial managers’ efforts at discursive community building had direct parallels in retail. In effect, analysis of the company-as-family metaphor in retail allows for further dissection of paternalist rhetoric, highlighting the extent to which paternalist programmes depended on an internally coherent discourse that justified hierarchical structures of decision-making and authority while privileging close interpersonal relationships. Secondly, the practical paternalist programmes described by Bradley and others for manufacturing companies were quite similar to those in both department and variety stores. In fact, elements of each of Bradley’s industrial paternalist prototypes can be found in attempts by both British and American retailers to secure *fundamental* and *functional loyalties* from their employees at mid-century.

Bradley’s taxonomy of employer paternalism highlights not only similarities between retail and industry, but also chronological divergences in paternalist programmes between manufacturing and retail businesses. In this respect, David Brody, Lizabeth Cohen, Irving Bernstein, Stuart Brandes and John Brueggemann have argued that ‘classic paternalism’ and ‘factory paternalism’

⁶ *Ibid.*, 183-191.

declined in manufacturing during the Great Depression as a result of tight profit margins, state intervention and the rise of industrial unionisation.⁷ Yet these forms of paternalism not only persisted, but expanded in retail and other businesses largely outside the scope of union bargaining in the years immediately following the Second World War.⁸ Historical focus on decline in industrial paternalism in the 1930s and 1940s has resulted in large part from a historiographical preoccupation with paternalism as anti-unionism. Given that focus, it is not particularly surprising that the decline of certain paternalist programmes in industry mirrored the rise of industrial unionism in the 1930s. In part, the persistence of 'classic' and 'factory' paternalism into mid-century in retail can be explained by unionisation's comparatively small inroads on the trade at that time. However, the causal link could be reversed: it might be said that the efforts of retail managers to nurture corporate loyalties, ambitions of upward mobility and notions of middle-class respectability among employees through traditional forms of paternalism explain in part the low rates of unionisation in the trade. More importantly, the chronological differences in managerial styles between retail and manufacturing make possible discussion of the multiple functions served by paternalism, above and beyond its role as deterrent to unionisation.

Finally, Bradley's classification of paternalist styles highlights chronological differences between British and American retail in terms of change in rhetoric and benefit systems. In America, retail managerial style followed industrial trends more closely. Many American firms were less reluctant to abandon certain aspects of paternalism in favour of the individualism of 'new' managerial styles during the Cold War years. In contrast, the persistence of the retail living-in system and the historical strength of the family firm in Britain translated into continued reliance on traditional paternalist models, particularly in British department stores.⁹

⁷ Gerald Zahavi, 'Negotiated Loyalty: Welfare Capitalism and the Shoeworkers of Endicott Johnson, 1920-1940,' *Journal of American History* 70 (Dec. 1983), 602-620, 603. Brody, 'Rise and Decline of Welfare Capitalism,' 48-81. Elizabeth Cohen, *Making A New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism*. John Brueggemann, 'The Power and Collapse of Paternalism: The Ford Motor Company and Black Workers, 1937-1941,' *Social Problems* 47 (2000), 220-240.

⁸ Jacoby, *Modern Manors*.

⁹ On the continuity of the family firm in Britain and its impact on managerial change, see Alfred Chandler, 'The Growth of the Transnational Industrial Firm in the United States and United

Bradley's four types of industrial paternalism prove useful then, for outlining historical similarities and differences in paternalism between retail and manufacturing businesses and between British and American retail. However, the particular usefulness of Bradley's analysis for this study is the extent to which it delineates 'factory', 'classical', and 'neo' paternalism as components of corporate culture in different periods. This chapter will explore the continued expression of those models in mid-twentieth-century British and American retail managerial styles. Various elements of rhetorical and material paternalism will be continually tested against the criteria necessary for the construction and maintenance of employee loyalties as defined through Hirschman's and Fox's theories in Chapter One. Of particular importance are the presence of managerial customs allowing for expression of voice, the construction of explicit or implicit penalties for exit, the existence of sentiments and symbols of reciprocity, the valuation of interpersonal relationships, and the subordination of rival loyalties to a unitary system of company loyalty.

The Retail House and Family: Paternalist Discourse and the Subordination of Rival Loyalties

Like their industrial counterparts, British and American retailers continually attempted to construct a unified company culture through which company loyalties could be solicited and maintained. Retail employers were astutely aware that many employees' decisions about work were influenced by personal communities of family and friends, and that these interpersonal loyalties easily trumped company loyalties when the two were at odds. Consequently, store managers continually attempted to reconstruct the 'natural' bonds of family and friendship within the workplace itself. They operated on the tenuous premise that the more employees had invested their identities and social networks in the store, the more likely they might be to invest themselves in the company and its goals.

In their attempts to construct a sense of community that would shore up company loyalties, managers of the well-established department stores in Britain

Kingdom: A Comparative Analysis,' *Economic History Review* 33 (Aug. 1980), 396-410. P. L. Payne, 'Family Business in Britain: An Historical and Analytical Survey,' in Akio Okochi and Shigeaki Yasuoka (Eds.), *Family Business in the Era of Industrial Growth* (Tokyo: Tokyo Univ. Press, 1984). On international family firm history, see special issue of *Business History* 35 (Oct. 1993), esp. Roy Church, 'The Family Firm in Industrial Capitalism: International Perspectives on Hypotheses and History,' 17-43.

and America routinely fell back on the well-refined rhetoric of company as family that had pervaded business culture since at least the nineteenth century. Although use of the family metaphor for loosely describing work cultures had probably developed long before industrialisation, it was the new scale of business in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—when the company Chairman could no longer feasibly know all of his employees—that turned the use of family rhetoric into a well-refined managerial technique.¹⁰ Through use of the company-as-family metaphor, retail employers infused the work and leisure activities of shopworkers with the metaphorical language of family and kinship—a language meant to replicate the commitment and loyalties of bloodlines in the economy of the retail establishment.

The rhetoric of family employed by well-established department stores stemmed in large part from those stores' cultural origins. The majority of British and American department stores had begun, like Harrods in London, House of Fraser in Glasgow, Wanamaker's in Philadelphia and the J. L. Hudson Company in Detroit as small drapers or grocers in the nineteenth century. In these proto-department stores, shop assistants were treated by their employers as apprentices, often housed under their employer's roof, living by their surrogate family's schedule and rules.¹¹ As those small shops developed into larger department stores through acquisitions and merchandise diversification, the explicitly paternalist conditions of work continued—particularly under the 'living-in' system in Britain. However, even in those department stores without living-in systems and workplace 'families' that both worked and lived together, store culture continued to be strongly defined by the family firm model. Harriet Bradley argued that the viability of the family metaphor in industry depended specifically on the continuity of the family firm and on the maintenance of hereditary ownership.¹² The continued strength of family rhetoric in stores like

¹⁰ Mandell, *Corporation as Family*, 1, 13-16.

¹¹ On the department store's humble beginnings, Robert Hendrickson, *The Grand Emporiums: The Illustrated History of America's Great Department Stores* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 60-149, 345-454; Alison Adburgham, *Shops and Shopping, 1800-1914: Where, and in What Manner The Well-dressed Englishwoman Bought Her Clothes* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1964), 137-148. Bill Lancaster, *The Department Store: A Social History* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 7-15. On living in, Christopher Hosgood, "'Mercantile Monasteries': Shops, Shop Assistants, and Shop Life in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain' *Journal of British Studies* 38 (July 1999), 331-336. P. C. Hoffman, *They Also Serve: The Story of the Shop Worker* (London: Porcupine Press, 1949), 18-66.

¹² Bradley, 'Change and Continuity,' 189.

Harrods, House of Fraser, Marks & Spencer, and Strawbridge & Clothier, where founders or their descendants retained ownership and directorship into the mid-twentieth century suggests that the evolution of family rhetoric in retail was also intrinsically linked to the sustenance of the family firm.

Part of the reason for the continuity of family rhetoric in the early post-war years was that it helped store directors to meet some of the prerequisites of loyalty. In particular, the metaphor of family togetherness provided the basis for a sentiment of reciprocity between employees and directors, while offering a commonly-understood and highly-valued social model for the development of interpersonal loyalties within a store. Because of its generic nature, the family metaphor also helped retail employers to encompass and subordinate rival collegial and family loyalties within the 'family' of the store. In all of these endeavours, the staff magazine provided the main tool for rhetorical construction and regulation of company culture.¹³

Bourgeois Patriarchy

In her study of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century American industrial paternalism, Nikki Mandell has argued that the values underlying the rhetorical family model in business replicated those of the bourgeois Victorian family.¹⁴ While this is not particularly surprising of either British or American industry at the turn of the century, given the privileged place of the middle-class family in Victorian and Edwardian social and political life, it is remarkable that the family rhetoric of the retail store remained so immutable in both countries through the mid-twentieth century.¹⁵ Although employers used the term 'family' more loosely in those stores that had shifted from family to corporate ownership, at others—such as Harrods, the House of Fraser, Marks & Spencer's and Strawbridge and Clothiers—the rhetoric of the store as family retained all of its bourgeois Victorian patriarchal permutations. Perhaps this is because the family model continued to offer employers a rhetorical basis for building the sentiment of

¹³ Retail staff magazines served many of the same purposes of industrial magazines. See Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism*, 62-65. Tone, *Business of Benevolence*, 99-139. John Griffiths, "'Give my Regards to Uncle Billy . . .': The Rites and Rituals of Company Life at Lever Brothers, c. 1900-1990," *Business History* 37:4 (1995), 25-45.

¹⁴ Mandell, *Corporation as Family*, 8-9, 25-47.

¹⁵ On changes in family imagery in inter-war industrial paternalism, see Mandell, *Corporation as Family*, 133-135.

reciprocity necessary for cultivation of employee loyalties. Mandell has argued that turn-of-the-century employers chose the family trope precisely because it helped to elide class conflict in the workplace by inculcating workers with middle-class values and invoking a commonly understood model of reciprocal obligation and reward.¹⁶ In that sense, little had changed by the mid-twentieth century.

The company-as-family metaphor was not a democratic, but a hierarchical model for workplace relationships. At the pinnacle of the 'retail house' was the company chairman-as-patriarch. The chairmen of large department stores served as father figures to their staff members, modelling the mores of the bourgeois patriarch against which employees were to judge their own values, ambitions and social performances. These men acted as both stern disciplinarians and dispensers of praise in the pages of staff magazines where their addresses to staff were published, and on the literal shop floor where they took frequent tours of their businesses, interacting with as many employees as possible. On the subject of Sir Hugh Fraser's relationship with employees in 1964, one House of Fraser editorialist commented, 'his wanderings among the counters, his appraisal of the merchandise, his conversations with the staff are much the same as they were in the original one store of Fraser Sons.'¹⁷ Individual loyalties to the Chairman were nurtured by these trips around the store where the possibility always remained that a good performance for the Chairman or other directors might prompt an on-the-spot promotion, as one Pontings department store polish demonstrator pleasantly discovered.¹⁸ Basic interpersonal loyalties between retail employees and the chairmen of their stores were constructed through these face-to-face encounters on the shop floor, through banquets and sports parties where the chairmen mingled with their employees, and through the company-as-family metaphor which enshrouded the Chairman and his work with the respect and deference granted the patriarch in the bourgeois Victorian family model.

Store managers were not reserved in their attempts to translate *fundamental loyalties* to the Chairman into *functional loyalties* promoting everyday efficiency and higher production in shop work. As in the Victorian

¹⁶ Mandell, *Corporation as Family*, 8, 19-20.

¹⁷ 'Hugh the Third,' *The House of Fraser*, 1964, 4-5, HF1/8/3/2, UGA.

family ideal, on which the company-as-family metaphor was predicated, the father figure served as ambassador from the 'home' of the store to the 'public' realm of politics and community service. So, for example, Sir Richard Burbidge of Harrods diligently worked for the Purley Schools, which educated the orphans of former shopworkers; Sir Hugh Fraser contributed generously to the Drapers' Chamber of Trade retirement homes for long-time employees of the retail trades; and G. Stockton Strawbridge, President of Strawbridge & Clothiers served as director of the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce from 1955, and sat on the board of the charitable Philadelphia Community Chest.¹⁹ Department store staff magazine editors argued that these noble activities of store chairmen in the political and social worlds outside the retail house justified reciprocal loyal self-discipline from employees within the seemingly domestic but actually very public arena of the store as home. The editor of the House of Fraser's magazine, *In Company*, described Sir Hugh's 'consequential place in the field of Industry and Commerce' and argued that 'his concern for the welfare of others makes additional inroads upon a busy day and an ever-generous purse'. He then called on the loyalties of the staff, writing:

We who are privileged to serve him within House of Fraser can reciprocate his regard for us by undertaking our own individual responsibilities and duties with ever greater enthusiasm and efficiency, and thereby lessening the burden of detail that must otherwise fall upon his dedicated shoulders.

Thus may we hope to liberate both his time and talents for the further succouring of the public good.²⁰

Shopworkers were not only promoting the success of their store when they performed their job tasks responsibly and diligently then; they were contributing to the public good by supporting their father figure in his local and national community service. In the hierarchy of the company-as-family metaphor, the place of shop floor workers was not to question the authority of management, but to obediently fulfil the positions given them, in service to the greater public role of the Chairman and his store.

¹⁸ 'A Pontings Personality,' *Kenbar* 1 (July 1950), 11, HF51/5/5/4, UGA. On this tradition of shop floor wanderings, see Lancaster, *Department Store*, 145-147.

¹⁹ Queen Elizabeth conferred Sir Hugh Fraser with a baronetcy in 1961 for his charity work, Editorial, *HG* 46 (Feb. 1961), 66. 'Service Is His Business,' *HG* 39 (Dec. 1954), 473, 481. 'Two Long Beloved Store Leaders Retire as Officers of Company,' *SC* 37 (May 1955), 2-3.

²⁰ *In Company* 3 (Spring 1961), 2, HF1/8/1/1/2, UGA.

In the store-as-family the Chairman's own nuclear family often modelled for shopworkers the deference and respect on which the Victorian family model depended. At Harrods, Sir Richard Burbidge's mother received eloquent praise and adulation from her son who treated her with great public respect as the grand-matriarch of the Harrods family.²¹ At sports days and store outings Chairmen's wives participated in the distribution of prizes and gifts. In this very public role the Chairman took centre stage where he announced the lucky winners, while his wife stood to the side and delivered prizes.²² (See Figure 2.1.) At Strawbridge and Clothier's in Philadelphia, 21 wives, sisters, daughters and friends of the company's executives, including the wife of second-in-charge G. Stockton Strawbridge, volunteered their service on the shop floor to help with one of the biggest sales days of the year in 1959. When Strawbridge and Clothier's directors' wives participated in community service activities and shop work, they demonstrated to employees that they too were loyal to the company ethic set forward by their husbands.²³ At Harrods and the House of Fraser, the Chairman's eldest sons, John Burbidge and the younger Hugh Fraser respectively, also played an important role in the family performance, insofar as they exemplified deference to and respect for their fathers and the patriarchal positions they would one day fill.²⁴

While Chairmen's families mingled with employees' families at store social events in both British and American stores, they never did so as equals. Their arrival at such events could be a spectacle in itself. At Harrods, Sir Richard Burbidge's wife and mother were greeted in 1947 by the helicopter arrival of one staff member's young daughter bearing greetings and bouquets.²⁵ In similar events at other stores, Chairmen's wives were lavished with bouquets and gifts from employees upon arrival, although it is not clear whether employees engaged in such spectacles voluntarily and spontaneously, or whether these were carefully staged proceedings. Regardless, the visibility of the Chairman's family at such

²¹ 'The Burbidges and Harrods,' *HG* 44 (Oct. 1959), 507-510. 'Salute to Lady Woodman,' *HG* 37 (June 1952), 178. 'Lady Woodman Accepts Presidency of Harrods Scripture Union,' *HG* 38 (July 1953), 274. 'A Christmas Message from Lady Woodman,' *HG* 38 (Dec. 1953), 450.

²² 'Forty-first Annual Sports Day,' *HG* 27 (July 1939), 221. 'The Harroddian Club Garden Party,' *HG* 45 (May 1960), 423-427.

²³ 'Executives' Families Rally Round to Help With Clover,' *SC* 36 (Dec. 1959), 5.

²⁴ 'Mr. John Burbidge Comes of Age,' *HG* 36 (Nov. 1951), 322. 'The Wedding of the Year,' *HG* 47 (June 1962), 319-321.

²⁵ 'Family Gathering,' *HG* 32 (Oct. 1947), 92-97.

Figure 2.1. Sports day at Barkers



Chairman of the Barkers' group, Trevor Bowen (right, seated), and 'Miss Bowen', his wife or daughter, awarding the Toddlers' Race prize to the child of a staff member.

The Kenbar 4 (Oct. 1954) HF51/5/5/35.

events epitomised for shopworkers the company-as-family metaphor with all of its relational dynamics. The Chairman's family embodied at a distance the middle-class values of respectability and deference to authority to which shopworkers were meant to aspire, and through which success in the store might be secured.²⁶

Fostering and Subordinating Collegial Loyalties

In his study of Victorian and Edwardian shopworkers in Britain, Christopher Hosgood suggested that the vertical loyalties between shopworkers and store owners created through family rhetoric and paternalism were important to store management to the extent that they distilled workers' loyalties to their colleagues in the store, or to shopworkers as a class.²⁷ Evidence from the mid-twentieth century suggests that the interpersonal dynamics underlying employer paternalism were in fact much more complex. Retail managers were not seeking to eliminate collegial loyalties that might rival loyalties to company or employer; by mid-century they were seeking instead to subordinate those rival loyalties under a 'unitary system' of loyalty to employer. The goal was not simply to make shopworkers more loyal to their employer to the exclusion of unions, but to make them more loyal to the store family of which the employer was head. After all, the more personal identity and interpersonal relationships shopworkers had invested in the store, the more costly 'exit' might be.

While the rhetoric of house and family pervaded store events, employers' addresses and staff handbooks, staff magazines were most crucial to employers' efforts at infusing workplace relationships with the commitments and values of family. House organs blurred the lines between work and play, between the store family and the private families of employees. These publications replicated in an abstract way the personal closeness shopworkers might have developed when living and working together in the forced living-in system of an earlier period. However, just as those earlier relationships had been regulated by a strict system of rules, so the relationships and rhetoric of family togetherness were regulated by the magazines' editors.

²⁶ Hosgood, "Mercantile Monasteries", 345. On the importance of the Chairman and his family to paternalism in other firms and trades, see Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics*, 135-136.

²⁷ Hosgood, "Mercantile Monasteries", 325-326.

Store managers were well aware that the success of their efforts to construct a sentiment of familiarity among ever-growing staffs depended on their staffs' willingness to contribute personal news items and photographs for publication. As Trevor Bowen, Chairman of the John Barker's group, wrote in the first issue of its magazine, *The Kenbar*, in 1950, 'a House Magazine can, of course, only achieve its purpose if it has the support of everyone "in the family"'. He invited his staff to make their artistic talents useful to the firm with the exhortation 'make this your own magazine.'²⁸ While some workers clearly did contribute their poetry, journalism, artwork and news items to the magazines, the firms themselves still retained a good degree of control over the publications, reserving the right to reject those submissions that 'have for a variety of reasons not been suitable for publication'.²⁹ These journals were edited to present a rather rosy, uncontested portrait of the retail house with only the slightest hint of dissent evident in satirical poetry.³⁰

The depth of the store's determination to nurture family-like bonds through staff magazines is most evident in Sir Hugh Fraser's introduction to the first issue of the House of Fraser's *In Company* magazine in 1959:

One of our most priceless assets as a People is our concept of family life. We owe much that is best in our characters to the long heritage of Hearth and Home with its abiding family influence.

As head of our Family Business, I am conscious of the value of tradition and of a sense of belonging which the family spirit can engender among us. The House of Fraser enjoys a strong family background, and is indeed appropriately named in the sense that a 'house' implies a family or race, as well as a commercial establishment. It is to further this spirit of co-operation, mutual interest and loyalty one to another, that this Journal is being published.

That this initial issue is of modest proportions and contains but a small selection of our House News is inevitable, but everything must have a beginning!

In further issues I hope that we shall see portrayed a wider aspect not only of news and ideas within our organisation, but also a fuller coverage of personal and social events, so that we may more fully understand one another—through the medium of the Journal—both in our work and play.³¹

²⁸ *The Kenbar* 1 (April 1950), 1.

²⁹ *The Kenbar* 1 (Aug. 1950), ii.

³⁰ The *Harroldian Gazette* published many such poems. For example, 'Live Gets Teejus, Don't It?' *HG* 35 (March 1950), 58. 'A Day at D. H. E.,' *HG* 32 (Oct. 1947), 125.

In this editorial statement, Sir Hugh Fraser called upon the deep values and traditions of the paradigmatic British family to legitimate the ever-expanding retail house. He made the new staff magazine a virtual family album claiming the *working and personal* lives of retail employees as part of the cultural heritage and family history of each store. Employees from different departments or even different stores were to come together as extended family would, through the bonds of kinship that they had in common as members of the British 'race' and children of the retail family.

Staff magazine editors and store directors stretched the discourse of familial relations as they struggled to equate the economic relationships of partner stores with the committed bonds of kinship. The Harrods group frequently reported 'Inter-house visits' made by small groups of promising retail employees to other stores in the group. Employees of urban stores visited their provincial counterparts like distant cousins making the trek to experience the way of life of their countryside kin, while those in outlying stores made the voyage into the city to receive the full tour of the urban emporium. These visits were an opportunity for employees to share meals and chats, learn the history, staff roles and selling strategies of the stores in the group, and receive the behind-the-scenes tours no customer would be privy to. At the heart of these 'familial' journeys was the store group itself: the group brought people together, and the primary topic of discussion was not 'family' gossip but better selling.³²

For those who did not have the opportunity to visit other stores, the Harrods staff magazine created a series of columns meant to introduce employees from all the participating houses to each other. For example, in the 'Meet Your Opposite Number' column, a certain department would be highlighted each month, with photos of one staff member from each store lined up on the left-hand side of the page, a series of short paragraphs to the right describing each of the employees pictured, his or her length of service to the group, experience in the department, family status and personal hobbies. Once again the retail House and the personal home overlapped as employees of the group who may never have met

³¹ 'A Word From the Chairman,' *In Company* 1 (Spring 1959), 1. See also, *Getting to Know the House of Fraser*, 1959, 1, HF1/8/3/1, UGA.

³² 'A Great Month for Inter-House Visits,' *HG* 35 (May 1950), 103-106. 'Getting to Know You,' *HG* 39 (Nov. 1954), 418.

in reality were introduced to each other's working and personal lives through the pages of the House journal.³³

Through staff magazines the retail house metaphor offered shopworkers a sense of tradition, and 'family' history, imbuing ordinary collegial relationships with historical significance, while imparting a sense of shared heritage and destiny. Staff magazines as family albums served to join the family of retail workers past and present in a narrative of continuity and progress leading up to the pinnacle that was post-war department store life. In order to invest newer employees in the work ethic of their firms, the editors of staff magazines allowed long-term employees columns in which they could write their memories of retail work in past decades. In these columns retirees and senior staff reminisced about the conditions of the early 1900s and the inter-war period. For example, in 1952 a British woman who had served for 46 years in Dickins & Jones' work rooms described the days of no wages under the living-in system, and no work when business was slow. She reminded her younger colleagues that they were fortunate to be working in a retail family that had supposedly moved beyond its domestic disputes.³⁴ In such columns the thorny issues of each store's history were not denied but nullified, even romanticised as the birthing grounds of the hard work ethic and family spirit department stores valued. Older members of staff were celebrated for their endurance and loyalty when their pictures and interviews were published in these nostalgic columns for all to see.³⁵

Work group activities outside the store held a privileged position in staff magazines, often featuring on the front covers of these publications. In fact, the majority of news in stores' house organs had less to do with the store as workplace than as community in the broadest sense. Most individual and group activities reported in the news columns took place outside the literal store walls, highlighting the bonds nurtured by shopworkers not only during working hours, but in leisure time as well. During the winter months news of sports teams, holiday dances, Bible clubs and theatre performances by employee groups

³³ For example, 'Meet Your Opposite Number in the Baby Shop,' *HG* 37 (May 1952), 146. Harrods also ran a column starting a year earlier entitled 'Round the Group' meant to bring together one individual from each House in the group in a 'general "get together"', *HG* 35 (Dec. 1950), 250. Similarly at Marshall Field's, 'Field's Folks on the Job,' *FG* 14 (12 Aug. 1946), 2.

³⁴ 'A Magnificent Record—46 Years' Service,' *HG* 37 (July 1952), 232.

³⁵ '56 Years Back,' *Kenbar* 1 (Oct. 1950), 10, HF51/5/5/6, UGA. 'Who's Who in the Partnership,' *GJLP* 39 (18 May 1957), 348.

proliferated.³⁶ The summer months were dominated by anticipation for and nostalgia over each group's 'Sports Day' or 'Garden Party'. These yearly milestones served as family gatherings, bringing employees of past and present from all the stores in a group together to eat and drink, to race and compete against each other for trophies and awards in the spirit of co-operation and sportsmanship expected at work.³⁷

Store gatherings and their coverage encouraged staff members to bond across the status hierarchy of store life, with sales assistants, van drivers, packers, buyers and managers all participating in the same outings and competitions. At one departmental outing from the London Pontings department store in the summer of 1950, the 'juniors' and their supervisors even switched roles with the supervisors taking orders for ice cream and deck chairs from the women usually serving under them.³⁸ In situations like these, the hierarchies of retail working life were temporarily and superficially transgressed, only to be replaced by the 'natural' hierarchies of family life. Staff magazines contributed to this ideal where members of the store were not differentiated by class—which might increase class consciousness and make stores more susceptible to unionisation—but by their position in the store family. While the activities and addresses of the company patriarch were reported by staff magazine columnists and editors with due respect and admiration, the same writers reported the antics of employees with simplistic humour reminiscent of a parent telling tales of much-loved, yet wayward children. In the mid-1950s, the *Harroddian Gazette* ran a column narrating the 'story of everyday happenings in the life of a junior sales assistant', Miss Archdale. It is unclear whether or not Miss Archdale and her sidekick, Jean, were real Harrods employees recounting earlier mishaps in their own careers. Regardless, the column offered humorous anecdotes similar to those contributed to employee news columns: Miss Archdale and Jean getting lost in the store basement, stitching labels into clothes upside down, accidentally bopping their Buyer on the backside with the door. In 'Miss Archdale's Diary', these antics

³⁶ For example, 'Harrods Christian Union,' *HG* 35 (June 1950), 149-150. "'Abu Hassan" and "The Black Spider"', *GJLP* 36 (17 April 1954), supplement. 'Our Men's Bowling League,' *SC* 32 (March 1950), 2-3. 'Our Women's Bowling League,' *SC* 32 (April 1950), 4-5. 'Let's Talk About Your Precious Leisure Time,' *SC* 36 (July-Aug. 1954), 7. 'Services,' *FG* 14 (8 Aug. 1946), 4.

³⁷ The Sports Day and Garden party reports fill the center pages of all summer issues, but for examples see *HG* 32 (Oct. 1947), 92-97; *Kenbar* 4 (Oct. 1954), 12-13; 'Odney Rag Regatta,' *GJLP* 32 (5 Aug. 1950), supplement.

were placed in constant contrast with the respectable department of more experienced senior employees.³⁹ Through columns like these, the discourse of store as 'family' elided class conflict, not by democratising workplace relationships, but by romanticising the relationships and roles of employers and employees within the paternalist hierarchy itself.

Subordinating family loyalties

Just as retail managers subordinated potentially rival collegial loyalties to the hegemony of the store-as-family, so too did they integrate potentially rival *family* loyalties into the processes by which company loyalties were constructed. The rhetoric of house and family easily encompassed both working and leisure time, facilitating the inclusion of extended natural families in the activities and community of the retail 'house.' In effect, the family metaphor in both its rhetorical and practical permutations shored up the unitary system of loyalties adhered to by employers by weaving the strong loyalties of kinship and the nuclear family into the fabric of department store employee relations.

Post-war department store managers created a multitude of opportunities to incorporate the tangible family of the employee into the culture and history of the composite retail family. In the summer sports days and garden parties were meant not only for employees, but for the entire extended family, with races and competitions for toddlers and teenagers, and sideline seats for visiting parents of staff members. At the holidays, stores hosted in their toy departments Christmas parties and visits by Santa Claus for employees' children. With seasonal periodicity, children of employees donned small outfits from boys' and girls' departments to serve as live mannequins in staff and customer fashion shows.⁴⁰ Through such activities, the entire family could be part of the store's selling mission, cultivating store loyalty for future employees and consumers at an early age.

Department stores were proud of the families they claimed as their own, with subsequent generations of employees joining the same stores and often the same departments in which their parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles had spent

³⁸ *Kenbar* 1 (July 1950), 9.

³⁹ For example, see 'Miss Archdale's Diary,' *HG* 41 (March 1956), 138; 41 (Nov. 1956), 504-505.

their careers. In 1956 John Lewis Partnership reported that of the 12,341 employees in its 27 stores, 1309 (10.6 per cent) worked in the same store as other family members. In one store alone, a full one-third of staff were related to other store employees!⁴¹ In Britain particularly, staff magazines published photographs and columns documenting the inter-generational commitment of a single family to a single store. Most magazines had occasional photos or stories of their long-standing employee families, but in 1949 Harrods turned these into a regular series, entitled 'Family Portraits'. Each month photos of members of each generation of the family on display would be arranged within picture frame borders with their vital information listed underneath: name, department of service and dates of employment.⁴² (See Figure 2.2.)

Staff magazines frequently reported with pride the creation of new store families through marriages between employees.⁴³ These marriages were not only something to celebrate in the pages of staff magazines; they were also possibilities advertised to new recruits as part of the potential of the retail career. In 1949 a Harrods staff recruitment leaflet claimed that 'the foundation of lifetime friendships and in some cases the meeting of one's future partner in life—all are offered when one is a member of the happy family "working with Harrods."' The leaflet supplemented these words on the prospect of meeting one's future spouse at work with images of young men and women gazing into each other's eyes over a meal in the Staff Restaurant, and walking arm in arm on the Sports Grounds.⁴⁴ (See Figures 2.3 and 2.4.) The very moment when Harrods capitalised on the fact that its own employees sometimes married by advertising that *possibility* to young recruits revealed the store's determined commitment to cement the loyalties of the store family with the commitments of literal kinship.

The retail house extended its reach into the relations of kinship beyond the store through house journals, claiming the activities and relationships of the natural family as part of the department store's culture and history. The pages of employee magazines recorded the activities and histories of individuals, families and communities within the store, telling stories in images and words of births,

⁴⁰ 'They Came—They Saw—They Were Conquered!' *FG* 19 (31 Dec. 1951), 4. 'Sunday, December 7, is Big Day for Children of Store Employees,' *FG* 20 (24 Nov. 1952), 6.

⁴¹ 'Relationships in the Partnership', *GJLP* (7 Jan. 1956), 1231.

⁴² 'Family Portraits,' *HG* 34 (June 1949), 139.

⁴³ For example, Staff News section, *HG* 40 (Dec. 1955), 582.

Figure 2.2. 'Family Portraits'



This is the sixth of a series in which we salute some of those families who, through three generations, have served the House of Harrods.

The Harrodian Gazette 34 (Oct. 1949), 220.

Figure 2.3. Love on the sidelines...



Note that at Harrods, staff could expect to be served in the Staff Restaurant as their customers might be served in the store dining rooms.
Working with Harrods (c. 1949), 8. Courtesy of Harrods Company Archive.

Figure 2.4. But not on the shop floor



Pete: "The heck with the work, it's more fun talking to you." This is a quick way to become unemployed.

Although many stores encouraged workplace romances (above), these were not to interfere with workplace responsibilities.
Donald K. Beckley and William B. Logan, *The Retail Salesperson at Work* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1948), 103.

engagements, weddings, retirements, promotions, graduations, anniversaries and holidays. For example, in 1946 the *Field Glass* ran a column entitled 'Seeing Double' with pictures and stories of twins who worked in the store or twin children of employees.⁴⁵ During the Second World War, individual families were brought together through both celebration and mourning as house organs published news of employees, their spouses, children and siblings on the battlefield.⁴⁶ In 1948, JC Penney's devoted two full pages in its national staff magazine to illustrate with photos the daily life of the company's top sales associate in small town Fort Kent, Maine, from feeding her baby in the morning to tucking herself in at night.⁴⁷ Ever original, the *Harroddian Gazette* ran a 'Pet's Corner' column in 1955 with pictures of staff members' four-legged companions.⁴⁸ All of these news items brought a sense of familiarity, commonality and interconnectedness to organisations growing only less familiar, because of the constant expansion of the retail household.

Staff magazines did not only bring family life into the store, but brought the store into the private arena of home and family. House organs allowed shopworkers to bring a carefully-regulated bit of store culture into their homes on a regular basis. In effect, there was always an element of public relations in stores' employee magazines. While store managers may have hoped that the store as community could be the centre of their employees' public lives, it was never meant to be entirely insular. After all, loyalty to the community of the store would only be truly consummated when each worker had adopted 'a cheerful optimistic, and enthusiastic view about our place of business' that could be spread to the larger community through the performance that was store selling, and through the personal networks of shopworkers.⁴⁹ Letters from family members of employees published in the John Lewis Partnership's weekly *Gazette* demonstrate

⁴⁴ *Working With Harrods* (c. 1949), HCA.

⁴⁵ 'Seeing Double,' *FG* 13 (11 March 1946), 2.

⁴⁶ Many issues, *FG* 12-13 (1944-1945). *The Forces Bulletin* (Jan. 1944-June 1946), K6, M&SA.

'Our Store Family In the Service,' *SC* 25 (Dec. 1943), 10-11.

⁴⁷ 'In a Town of 4,500, Penney's Top Associate Works Selling Miracle,' *PD* 13 (Nov. 1948), 1, 4-5.

⁴⁸ 'Pet's Corner,' *HG* 40 (June 1955), 288.

⁴⁹ 'Talking it Up,' *FG* 23 (21 May 1956), 2; 'The Good Actor,' *FG* 24 (22 Oct. 1956), 2; 'Happy Holidays,' *FG* 21 (4 Jan. 1954), 2; 'The News In Action In the Store,' *SMN* (7 April 1955), 4.

the success of journal editors' efforts to turn store activities into coffee table conversation in at least some homes.⁵⁰ (See Figure 2.5.)

Retail managers were well aware that shopworkers could be ambassadors from the store to potential employees and customers, not only at work but in their private lives as well. Hence the frequent advertisements in *Pay Day*, *Penney News*, the *Field Glass*, and *Store Chat* encouraging employees to 'tell your friends and family about the seasonal work available in sales.'⁵¹ In 1957, JC Penney's offered the security of knowing 'We'll treat them extra-special knowing they're your friends or relatives!'⁵² (See Figure 2.6.) Advertisements in store magazines targeted at the family members of staff were only one manifestation of a whole discourse of family in stores, which aimed to inculcate an ethic of reciprocity between employees and store directors, and to subordinate both collegial and family loyalties to an overarching loyalty to employer.

Material Paternalism and the Psychology of Reciprocity

Gratitude lays the foundation for loyalty.
--Arlie Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*⁵³

The practical manifestation of employer paternalism in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Britain and America was welfare capitalism or 'factory paternalism' in Bradley's model. At the turn of the century, as retail and industrial employers were using the rhetoric of house and family to nurture an atmosphere of co-operative reciprocity between employees and management, they also began implementing intricate systems of employee benefits meant to fulfil their end of the reciprocal bargain. Such benefits included organised social activities, leisure facilities, holiday provisions and a range of financial rewards for long service. In return for their apparent generosity, employers expected loyalty, higher production and longevity of job tenure from their employees.⁵⁴ While

⁵⁰ See for example, a letter from 'Partner's Husband', 'The Journalism,' *GJLP* 35 (Jan. 1954), 747-748; and 'Pay of Waitresses,' *GJLP* 35 (19 Dec. 1953), 688.

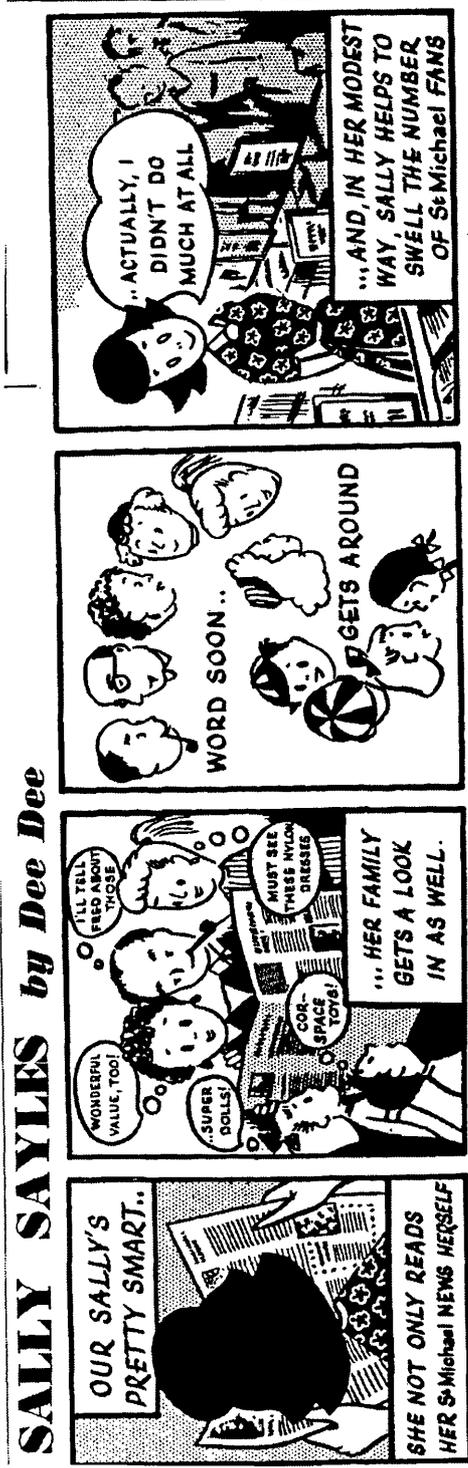
⁵¹ 'Help Wanted!' *SC* 38 (Sept. - Oct. 1956), 2; 'Have Friends Who Want a Job?' *FG* 20 (29 Sept. 1952), 1, 3; 'The Christmas Rush is On,' *FG* 17 (26 Sept. 1949), 8; 'Do You Know This Man?' *PD* 4 (July 1939), 5; 'Know Someone Job Hunting?' New York Supplement, *PN* 23 (July 1957), 4.

⁵² 'Know Someone,' 4.

⁵³ Arlie Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (London: University of California, 1983), 101.

⁵⁴ Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism*. Tone, *Business of Benevolence*, 80-98.

Figure 2.5. Staff magazine as circular

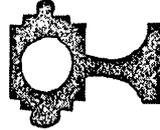


The staff magazine was a means for informing staff members' families about the goings on of the store, but also a means for advertising store goods. This was particularly true of the Marks & Spencer's and JC Penney's staff magazines, which regularly carried merchandise information.

St. Michael News (22 July 1955), 3, Marks & Spencer's Archive.

Figure 2.6. 'Make it a community affair'

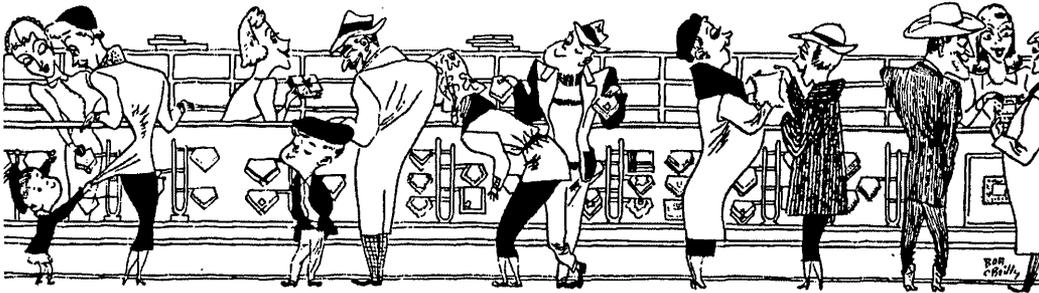
Marshall Field & Company



Christmas

is only

a few weeks away!



Time to remind your friends and all the folks in your neighborhood they can earn extra money in a spare-time job at Field's.

Make it a community affair with a job at

MARSHALL FIELD & COMPANY

send them to the Employment Office—Third Floor, South, State



Many stores depended on pre-existing interpersonal loyalties among family and friends to help recruit new staff, particularly at peak selling periods.

Field Glass 19 (8 Oct. 1951), 8.

many historians have argued that welfare capitalism and the ethic of reciprocity it epitomised evaporated under the heat of Depression era unemployment, bankruptcy and trade unionism, Nikki Mandell and Andrea Tone have made the case that turn-of-the-century welfare work set the precedent for employee benefit systems that survived until at least the late twentieth century.⁵⁵

Historians have offered many explanations for the emergence of welfare capitalism or ‘factory paternalism’ in industrial and service-sector employment. Many, including Stuart Brandes, have cited employers’ anti-unionism as central to the development of benefit systems, in an era rife with industrial dispute.⁵⁶ Patrick Joyce has argued that the development of paternalism in Britain served as a balance to *laissez-faire* capitalism, offering employers a voluntarist approach to welfare that would also portray ‘the civilising mission of industry’ in the public realm.⁵⁷ Similarly, Andrea Tone maintained that employer benevolence in America was largely a public relations campaign intended to stave off regulatory legislation during the Progressive era, while appeasing restless employees, reform-minded consumers, and politicking legislators.⁵⁸ Another explanation is that welfare capitalism actually paid off, delivering at least modest improvements in employee loyalty and productivity for less than the cost of a rise in wages.⁵⁹ This is a particularly plausible argument for the retail case, where profit margins were notoriously tight and where merchants counted on group benefits to help offset the comparatively low wages of shop work. Indeed, all of these explanations could easily explain not only the emergence of welfare capitalism at the turn of the century, but also its continuation in British and American retail through the mid-twentieth century under conditions of rising unionisation and reform of regulatory legislation.

British and American department and variety stores witnessed an expansion rather than contraction of paternalist social and financial welfare

⁵⁵ Tone, *Business of Benevolence*, 245-257. Mandell, *Corporation as Family*, 158.

⁵⁶ Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism*. Gerald Zahavi, *Workers, Managers, and Welfare Capitalism*, esp. 150-176. Joan Sangster, ‘The Softball Solution: Female Workers, Male Managers and the Operation of Paternalism at Westclox, 1923-60,’ *Labour/Le Travail* 32 (Fall 1993), 167-199. On paternalism as a tool for creating a split labour market averse to unionisation, see Brueggemann, ‘The Power and Collapse of Paternalism: The Ford Motor Company and Black Workers, 1937-1941,’ *Social Problems* 47 (May 2000), 220-240.

⁵⁷ Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics*, 134-157.

⁵⁸ Tone, *Business of Benevolence*, esp. 1-65. See also Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism*.

⁵⁹ Tone, *Business of Benevolence*, 63-65, 199-212.

programmes in the initial decades of the post-war period. While many of the extracurricular benefits of welfarism in British and American department stores had disappeared during the 1920s and 1930s, many others remained or were revived during the Second World War. However, the basic reciprocal premise of these programmes remained the same: employers would give employees social and financial benefits that could allow them the social mobility they desired, but these benefits would remain conditional on continued service, or *fundamental loyalties* to employer.

Cultivating Class: Lifestyle Benefits

Nikki Mandell has argued that the full range of workplace and leisure activities and benefits organised through a firm, like the rhetoric of the company-as-family model, privileged the social values and ethics of bourgeois middle-class culture.⁶⁰ Among the pioneers of welfare capitalism in early-twentieth-century America and Britain, department store employers were at the forefront of efforts to initiate a wide range of benefit programmes for their employees—programmes through which values of hard work, camaraderie, artistic taste and middle-class respectability could be inculcated. Such programmes included departmental outings, sports teams, musical groups, libraries, tea rooms, cafeterias, sewing clubs, Bible clubs, other hobby clubs, bonus systems, discounts, savings plans and in-store medical care.⁶¹ This range of social and financial benefits helped employers shape the consumption patterns, education and cultural performance of their employees in ways meant to foster a sense of class fluidity, social ambition, individualism and deference to hierarchies of power.

From the beginning, department stores' benefits programmes promised working-class employees the social mobility they might not otherwise obtain. The very existence of store-related social and cultural activities that privileged bourgeois gender roles and cultivated taste cast a beam of respectability over shop work as employment and over retailers as employers.⁶² This cultivated sense of refinement among retail employers and many of their employees cast into the

⁶⁰ Mandell, *Corporation as Family*, 49-69.

⁶¹ Tone, *Business of Benevolence*, 66-98. Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 142-146. William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 120-122. On such activities in industry, see Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism*, 75-82.

shadows popular criticisms that shop work was at best a job defined by deferential service, and at worst the road to the brothel for many innocent young women. As Susan Porter Benson, Bill Lancaster and Christopher Hosgood have argued, late nineteenth and early twentieth-century department store retailers encouraged employees to invest their hopes of upward social mobility and their social class identities in the extracurricular activities of store life instead of in the sometimes dubious conditions of the job itself.⁶³ In turn, the range of social, cultural and financial benefit programmes initiated in American and British department stores at the turn of the century allowed employers the hope of moulding their employees' consumption habits, class consciousness and leisure activities for improved public relations with both employees and customers.

The store-centred social programmes initiated during the turn-of-the-century development of welfare capitalism or 'factory paternalism' in British and American department stores remained a strong element of retail corporate culture in the mid-twentieth century. In Britain, selling and non-selling departments still made outings to the beach and hills each summer, while in America company picnics remained a yearly milestone for many store cultures.⁶⁴ While many store outings in America were to local leisure centres, Strawbridge & Clothiers of Philadelphia topped them all off by subsidising a trip to Europe for some of its employees in 1960.⁶⁵ (See Figure 2.7.) Other social activities included basketball, baseball and bowling teams in American stores, tennis tournaments, rifle clubs and hobby clubs in British stores, and musical and theatre groups in both countries.⁶⁶ (See Figures 2.8 and 2.9.) Social activities also included subsidised professional performances for employees. In 1953/54 alone, the John Lewis Partnership spent £3,000 subsidising theatre and concert tickets to help Partners secure good seats at the best of London's performances and 'to increase the demand for worthwhile plays and music', and £8,000 for a two-year

⁶² Leach, *Land of Desire*, 120-122.

⁶³ Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 142-146. Hosgood, 'Mercantile Monasteries,' 344-345. Lancaster, *Department Store*, 139-147.

⁶⁴ 'Wilmington's First Picnic,' *SC* 35 (Oct. 1953), 15. 'Manager Treats Associates to Spring Chicken Fry!' *PD* 9 (July 1944), 5. Employee news sections during summer months, *HG*; *Kenbar*, HF 51/51/5/5/1-41.

⁶⁵ 'It Was Great Fun!,' *SC* 51 (July-Aug., 1960), 12-13.

⁶⁶ 'Recreation,' *GJLP* 31 (22 Oct. 1949), 458-460; (2 April 1949), 101. 'Store's Sportsmen Display Winning Ways,' *FG* 28 (12 June 1961), 4.

Figure 2.7. Strawbridge & Clothier Goes to Europe, 1964



Employees Social Activities folder, Box 8, Strawbridge & Clothier's collection, Hagley Museum and Library Pictorial collection.

Figure 2.8. Not a job, but a lifestyle

THE PARTNERS' DIARY	
<p>MONDAY, 1ST OCTOBER 6.00 p.m. Ballroom Dancing Club. Chadwickham Ballroom. 6.00 p.m. Table Tennis Club, John Lewis, West House Dining-Room. 6.00 p.m. Rifle Club. John Lewis, West House Rest Room.</p> <p>TUESDAY, 2ND OCTOBER 6.00 p.m. Rifle Club. John Lewis, West House Dining-Room. 6.15 p.m. Venture Club. Chadwickham Ballroom. 6.30 p.m. Music Society Choir. Social Secretary's Office. 6.30 p.m. Sabeema Sketching Club, Chelsea Group, Peter Jones.</p> <p>WEDNESDAY 3RD OCTOBER 1.30-2 p.m. Lunch-time recital. Alex Kligerman (piano). Social Secretary's Office. 2.30 p.m. Bainbridges. Albert House Football Club v. Bensham N.C.T. Away. 5.45 p.m. Sailing Club Meeting. Social Secretary's Office. 6.30 p.m. Photographic Society. Beginners' Course Lecture. Chadwickham. 6.30 p.m. Scottish Dancing Club. Chadwickham Ballroom.</p> <p>MONDAY 8TH OCTOBER 5.30 p.m. Christian Fellowship. 32 Cavendish Square. 6.0 p.m. Rifle Club. John Lewis, West House Rest Room. 6.0 p.m. Table Tennis Club. John Lewis, West House Dining-Room. 6.30 p.m. Sabeema Sketching Club. Social Secretary's Office. 7.0 p.m. Peter Jones Restaurant. Music Festival.</p>	<p>TUESDAY 9TH OCTOBER 6.0 p.m. Rifle Club. John Lewis, West House Rest Room. 6.30 p.m. Venture Club. Chadwickham. 7.0 p.m. Peter Jones Restaurant. Music Festival.</p> <p>WEDNESDAY 10TH OCTOBER 1.30-2.0 p.m. Folk-song recital by Frances and Alan Kitching. 2.30 p.m. Bainbridges. Albert House Football Club v. Co-operative Welfare (A). Home. 6.30 p.m. Scottish Dancing Club. Chadwickham Ballroom. 6.30 p.m. Photographic Society. Beginner's Course Lecture by Mr. T. O. Fry.</p> <p>THURSDAY 11TH OCTOBER Jessop and Son's Dance.</p> <p>SUNDAY 14TH OCTOBER 11.30 a.m. Netball Rally. Odney Club.</p> <p>MONDAY 15TH OCTOBER Opening of Sabeema Sketching Club Exhibition. 6.00 p.m. Ballroom Dancing. Chadwickham. 6.00 p.m. Table Tennis Club. John Lewis, West House Dining Room. 6.00 p.m. Rifle Club. John Lewis, West House Rest Room. 6.00 p.m. Chess Club. Vocational Training Department. 6.30 p.m. Garden Society. Illustrated talk on gardens. Department of Personnel, 32 Cavendish Square.</p>

Gazette of the John Lewis Partnership 38 (29 Sept. 1956), 780.

Figure 2.9. Sportsmanship at work



Strawbridge and Clothier's men's bowling league.

Store Chat (March 1950 folder), Strawbridge and Clothier's collection, Hagley Museum and Library Pictorial Collection.



Strawbridge & Clothier's men's basketball team.

Store Chat 32 (Feb. 1950).

engagement of the Boyd Neel Orchestra for a series of staff concerts.⁶⁷ Such extracurricular activities capitalised on the family-like bonds promoted in paternalist rhetoric, building a foundation of interpersonal loyalties on which the managerial quest for corporate loyalty could be built.

Even though shopworkers could not always afford the goods they sold and delivered to customers, the stores they worked for promised a glimpse of the lifestyle of those they served. Department store social activities and workplace facilities closely mirrored the middle-class family rhetoric on which corporate culture had long been predicated. Staff magazines reported the arrival of new books in store libraries full of carefully selected reading materials for both work and play.⁶⁸ Musical and theatrical groups, such as the Marshall Field's Choral Society, provided training in classical performance.⁶⁹ Fashion shows, breakfast clubs and beauty training programmes such as the 'Good Grooming Clinics' and 'Charm Schools' at Strawbridge & Clothier's Philadelphia department store taught female employees the importance of physical appearance and style, and instructed them in the methods of achieving refined beauty.⁷⁰ Summarising a staff beautification day for young female employees at the John Lewis Partnership's London branches, the *Gazette* Editor argued that, 'The art of using cosmetics is one that has to be learned correctly to have the most rewarding effect, to be satisfying to the user and attractive to the beholder, and young girls, whose first earnings so often go straight from their pay envelopes to the Perfumery Department, can be helped and advised to make the wisest selection.'⁷¹ The patronising nature of these activities, which privileged one form of middle-class beauty, fashion, knowledge and culture above all others could be emphasised here, but not without acknowledging that such activities were always well attended. It was through such extracurricular activities that shopworkers—both

⁶⁷ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares* (London: Staples Press Limited, 1954), 9, 37-43.

⁶⁸ On store libraries, Library ad, *FG* 13 (4 Sept. 1945), 2; 'The Partnership's Library,' *GJLP* 39 (8 June 1957), 423; Miriam Scherer, 'Employee Libraries,' *JR* 18 (Feb. 1942), 22-23. On libraries in industry, Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism*, 61-62.

⁶⁹ 'Choral Society Concert,' *Retail Executive Office Notices*, no. 852, 5 April 1945, MFA.

'Pontings Players,' *Kenbar* 1 (Oct. 1950), 9, HF51/5/5/6, UGA.

⁷⁰ 'Good Grooming Clinic,' *SC* 40 (Feb. 1958), 5. 'Two new Youth Programs Added at S&C,' *SC* 38 (Sept. – Oct. 1956), 7. 'Store Pretties Up Its Elevator Girls,' *Life* 23 (15 Sept. 1947), 149-150, 152.

⁷¹ 'Beauty in the Making-Up,' *GJLP* 40 (21 June 1958), 481.

women and men—could cultivate bourgeois values and cultural performances, not only for the benefit of those they served, but for their own advantage as well.

For Harrods, that most upscale of retail establishments, the store's family image and social activities retained the Victorian-era bourgeois decadence that had otherwise been pared down among the British middle classes by the mid-twentieth century. In Harrods recruitment leaflets, editors spent pages describing for potential employees the staff restaurants, smoking rooms, rest rooms, and sports grounds available to employees. For those wishing to join the Harrods group, whether as sales assistant, buyer, or porter, the store offered access to the 'Harrodian Club', 'a lovely mansion set amidst spacious grounds near the Thames at Barnes', where employees could play tennis or cricket, go swimming or rowing, lounge in the rest rooms or socialise in the dance hall.⁷² The John Lewis Partnership provided similar leisure grounds for its employees at the Odney Club. Of this and other provisions, Lewis argued in 1954, 'the John Lewis Partnership has reckoned that, if members not very lucky in their own level of income found that, so far as it did offer them any amenity, what it offered was "the best of everything", they would feel that to that extent at all events the Partnership was truly a classless society.'⁷³ But the Partnership's leisure culture was only 'classless' insofar as it was regulated simply by employment with the company rather than by cultural, social or material capital. Otherwise, the plethora of social activities and facilities available to employees at the Partnership, at Harrods, and at many other stores encouraged them to believe that employment in the department store was not just a job, but the means to enjoying middle-class lifestyles.

By mid-century staff magazines had taken on the role previously played by sewing, gardening, cooking and homemaking clubs that had once instructed female employees in the virtues of respectable middle-class domesticity. For those wishing to cultivate the values and talents of the middle and upper classes in their own homes, staff magazine columns offered motherly advice, giving instruction in proper pronunciation, keeping a fashionable closet, hosting guests, theatre-going and horse-riding. Regular articles in staff magazines in both Britain and America offered gardening advice, healthy recipes and beauty tips for those

⁷² *Working With Harrods* (c. 1949), HCA.

⁷³ Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, 40. 'The Odney Club,' *GJLP* 39 (23 March 1957), supplement.

wishing to cultivate both home and body.⁷⁴ Through staff magazines, the social class system became a negotiable one: one where shopworkers could be privy to the secrets of ‘conspicuous consumption’ and ‘conspicuous leisure’ that might allow them entry to the middle classes on a social or cultural basis without having to meet the financial prerequisites of entry to middle-class society.⁷⁵ Indeed, one of the greatest benefits to employers of such columns and of store social benefits in general was that shopworkers could be assisted in cultivating all of the trappings of the middle-class lifestyles they aspired to without having to guarantee the wages that would make such lifestyles accessible to employees in their own right.

The social and cultural benefits retailers offered their employees through the store served a double managerial purpose. On the one hand, managers hoped that such benefits would facilitate the construction of employee loyalties to the store by weaving employees’ class identities, leisure activities and social relationships into the fabric of store life. On the other hand, managers could capitalise on employee participation in store social and cultural activities by infusing those activities with lessons that would make shopworkers—and salespeople particularly—better servants of the customer. Beauty tips and self-improvement programmes taught female shopworkers the make-up skills, hairstyles, proper posture and fashion conservatism necessary for pulling off a convincingly middle-class gendered performance. However, self-improvement could also make the saleswoman, and by association the merchandise she sold, seem more attractive and respectable to the customer. As one Marshall Field’s staff handbook stated, ‘By giving you a business-like look, dress standards increase the customer’s confidence in you as an efficient, *professional* person who knows what he’s doing.’⁷⁶ Domestic advice concerning cookery, hostessing, gardening and interior decorating taught employees the skills and rules of

⁷⁴ For example, ‘No White Elephants in Your Wardrobe!’, *The Kenbar* 4 (Oct. 1954), 17; ‘The Gentle Art of Equitation,’ *HG* 35 (May 1950), 121-122; ‘The Quality Look Achieved Through Good Grooming,’ *SC* 52 (Jan. 1961), 8-9; ‘Just Between us Girls,’ *For-ward* 2 (May 1957), 4.

⁷⁵ On conspicuous consumption and leisure, see Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (MacMillan Company, 1899. Reprint, New York: Mentor Edition, 1953), 41-80.

⁷⁶ Italics in original, *You and Your Job* Chicago: Marshall Fields, 1958, MFA. The following emphasise attractiveness at work and beyond. ‘In Meeting the Public, Put Your Best FACE Forward,’ *PD* 11 (Feb. 1947), 7. ‘Selling Through Appearance,’ *HG* 36 (Sept.-Oct. 1951), 312. ‘The Quality Look,’ 8-9. ‘Ready to Make a Personal Appearance?’ *SC* 54 (May 1963), 6.

bourgeois social interaction, but also offered them tips that could be used to help customers imagine the ways they might use the store's goods in their own homes. Staff fashion shows allowed employees the opportunity to dress up in the store's most expensive fashionwear and perform for their colleagues, cultivating in employees a sense of fashion, taste and material desire. However, the primary purpose of fashion shows was to impart the merchandise and fashion knowledge salespeople would need in order to serve the customer fully.⁷⁷ Sports teams and other group activities promised to nurture the interpersonal relationships on which corporate loyalties were built, but also encouraged participants to value teamwork, competition and ambition—values crucial to higher workplace productivity. By interweaving the pleasures of cultural performance with the skills and knowledge necessary to shop work, employers provided the basis on which *functional loyalties* might be built. Indeed, many hoped that in return for giving employees the social and cultural benefits of middle-class life, they would secure better performance on the shop floor. (See Figure 2.10.)

Stretching the Purse: Financial Incentives for Loyalty

Turn-of-the-century welfare programmes in retail stores did more than initiate the social and cultural activities that would supplement rhetorical paternalism. Employers knew that employee reciprocity also depended heavily on financial benefits, aside from wages, which offered employees tangible evidence of employer benevolence. Many of the financial benefits that were changing and expanding in the mid-twentieth century had origins in turn-of-the-century welfarism in both Britain and America: employee discounts, medical benefits, savings programmes, pensions, and paid holidays.⁷⁸ Although many of these benefits were put under pressure by the financial conservatism of the Depression, most were revived during the Second World War and early post-war years, as retail employers faced a tight job market and experienced difficulty recruiting and maintaining good staff. Even in these conditions, department and variety store employers did not offer material benefits freely and generously with the naïve hope that the unwritten dictum of employee/employer reciprocity would

⁷⁷ 'The Staff Fashion Show,' *HG* 35 (May 1950), 106; 'Staff Night,' *HG* 40 (June 1955), 266; 'Ladymere: Oh, Look they've come alive!' *Kenbar* 4 (June 1954), 6, HF51/5/5/34, UGA. *Hide Group Weekly Bulletin*, 117 (25 Feb. 1961), 4, HF29/6/1, UGA.

Figure 2.10. Staff theatre put to good use



BUYERELLA AND SELLERELLA

Staff theatre could be entertaining, satirical and subversive, as when male staff dressed up as female customers, but informative as well. Although staff theatre groups in the US and UK frequently performed mainstream plays, they also often performed satirical retail-theme plays enacting store history or good and bad salesmanship, as in this Partnership performance.

Gazette of the John Lewis Partnership Supplement 32 (11 March 1950), ii.

necessarily take hold. Instead, company directors and Personnel managers carefully regulated access to material benefits, rewarding employees of highest loyalty, and building employees'—and their families'—material and psychological investment in the store over time.

Both department and variety store employers offered loyalty-dependent financial rewards in many forms. A common form rapidly spreading in both British and American stores in the 1940s was the private pension scheme, usually available only to employees of very long service.⁷⁹ Britain was at the forefront of pensions benefits, with contributory pension schemes in about 40 Co-operative societies by 1924, a company sponsored pension scheme introduced at Harrods in 1939, a non-contributory scheme at the John Lewis Partnership from 1941, and a contributory scheme at John Barkers from 1944.⁸⁰ Through the 1940s and '50s many American stores also formalised what had to that point been discretionary individual pension plans. The American retail trade magazine *Department Store Economist* estimated in 1950 that one in six stores—and one in four of the largest stores—had formal pension plans, and that 84 per cent of those plans had been adopted since 1941.⁸¹

A major incentive for initiating formal pension plans was to avoid state regulation of retail employee relations, in keeping with retailers' own ideological agendas. As a *Department Store Economist* columnist warned, 'Either we provide pensions voluntarily or they are going to be imposed on us, with all the attendant ills and extra costs of State administration.'⁸² However, another major incentive for large retailers to implement either contributory or non-contributory schemes was to foster long-term *fundamental loyalties* among employees. In 1947, the Director of Pension Planning Company of New York advised department store employers that 'The prospect of future retirement security creates employe [sic]

⁷⁸ Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 193-196, 234-235, 203. Lancaster, *Department Store*, 145-147.

⁷⁹ On the history of pensions, see Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism*, 103-110.

⁸⁰ 'Pension Pointers,' *HG 27* (April 1939), 85; J. Pollitt and F. Hall, *The Policy of the Movement in Regard to Employees' Welfare and Joint Committees* (Manchester: Co-operative Union Ltd., 1924), 12-16; 'Pensions,' *GJLP 35* (30 May 1953), 249-250; 'Pensions,' *GJLP 39* (8 June 1957), 423; 'Appreciation of the John Barker Pension & Life Assurance Schemes,' *Kenbar 2* (April 1952), 10, HF51/5/5/23; 'Pensions: Questions & Answers,' *Kenbar 1* (May 1950), 11, HF51/5/5/2 and 1 (June 1950), HF51/5/5/3, UGA.

⁸¹ John Guernsey, 'The Pension Problem Facing Stores Today,' *DSE 13* (April 1950), 24-25, 30.

⁸² Guernsey, 'The Pension Problem,' 30.

loyalty and enthusiasm, and frequently deters employes from changing jobs.’⁸³ Pension programmes also helped retail employers to gently and respectfully dismiss older, less productive employees, a task they had not grappled with very successfully through the inter-war period.⁸⁴ One large American department store without a retirement plan experienced a crisis in employee morale when an older employee, ‘discharged after outliving her usefulness commit[ted] suicide in the store by leaping from an upper to a lower floor under dramatic circumstances’.⁸⁵ This was perhaps an extreme case, but it at least partly reflected a sense of insecurity and potential betrayal among long-term employees that many retail employers sought to replace with feelings of security and mutual loyalty through pension plans.

Another, closely related form of financial incentive for long-term loyalty was the Thrift Plan, such as that initiated at JC Penney stores in 1946. The Plan was open to all, but sought to reward those who ‘remain in the employe [sic] and contribute to the development of the Company over a considerable period of time’.⁸⁶ The basic premise of the Plan was that participants would deposit their savings, to which the company would add up to 75 per cent of the equivalent of those savings, up to seven per cent of an employee’s annual salary, and a portion of stock earnings from the Thrift Fund. Company contributions increased over time so that an employee’s ten-year contribution of \$720 would become \$2,416; a twenty year contribution of \$1,440 would become \$5,664; or a thirty year contribution of \$2,160 would become \$10,029.⁸⁷ However, in order to receive the benefit of company deposits, an employee had to contribute to the fund for at least ten consecutive years, privileging men and older women who could commit to such tenure.⁸⁸

⁸³ Meyer M. Goldstein, ‘Pension Plan for Department Store Employes,’ *DSE* 10 (Sept. 1947), 17, 22-23, 26. See also, Vincent T. Lorimer, ‘Pensions and Insurance Programs,’ *Stores* 40 (July-Aug. 1958), 20-21, 24-25; Walter Forster, ‘Essentials of Sound Pension Plans,’ *BNRDGA* 26 (Feb. 1944), 46, 74; John Guernsey, ‘Best Pension Plans for Stores and Why,’ *DSE* 13 (May 1950), 74-76, 80, 82.

⁸⁴ Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 200-203. On the continued concern over the age of staff compared to an increasingly young shopping public in the late 1960s, see E. B. Weiss, ‘Middle-age Store Staffs and our Youthful Society,’ *Stores* 50 (Oct. 1968), 30-31.

⁸⁵ Goldstein, ‘Pension Plan,’ 17.

⁸⁶ ‘Your Thrift Fund Account,’ *PD* 10 (April 1946), 2.

⁸⁷ ‘Penney People Are Valuable,’ *PD* 14 (Sept. 1949), 2.

⁸⁸ ‘Successful Saving in the Thrift Fund,’ *PD* 10 (March 1946), 2.

Pension programmes and thrift or savings plans were part of a wide range of financial benefits in British and American department and variety stores that encouraged *fundamental loyalties* among employees by increasing personal financial penalties for exit. Since the employee discount was the financial benefit most unique to retail, a deeper analysis of the discount in particular will help to elucidate the ways in which retail employers attempted to use material benefits—including pensions and savings plans—to extend shopworkers' wage packets *and* to subordinate workers' class identity and family loyalties under loyalty to employer.

Discounts on employee purchases were the most common, the most easily implemented and the most accessible benefits in retail employment. While the exact chronological origins of employee discounts are difficult to pin down, evidence from Susan Porter Benson's study of American shopworkers and Bill Lancaster's evidence on British shop work suggests that discounts were widespread in American and British retail by the First World War.⁸⁹ Certainly by the late 1930s the employee discount had become the foundation of employee benefit programmes, from the most upscale of urban department stores to the most common five-and-dime stores. Perhaps this was because employee discounts offered employers direct financial returns in a way no other benefit could. A National Retail Merchants Association (NRMA) survey of 191 American department stores in 1965 showed that employee discount purchases alone accounted for an average of 4.2 per cent of department store sales.⁹⁰ Retail employers were fully aware that their employees were not simply workers, but a captive consumer audience.

The nature of employee discounts differed from store to store. The discount offered on store purchases could range from 10 to 30 per cent, with the average discount rising in value according to length of service. The NRMA survey demonstrated that, by the mid-1960s, a full 40 per cent of American department store employers offered 20 per cent discounts for their employees, with the remainder offering between 10 and 15 per cent.⁹¹ As part of their ongoing efforts 'to assure a staff of reasonably well-dressed employees', many

⁸⁹ Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 193-196. Lancaster, *Department Store*, 145.

⁹⁰ *Retail Employee Discounts*, (New York: NRMA, 1965), i.

⁹¹ *Retail Employee Discounts*, 16.

stores offered higher discounts for clothing that fitted the strict rules of workplace fashion: plain black or navy for shopfloor personnel, and co-ordinated uniforms for backroom workers. However, more generous discounts on clothing were commonly offset by more strict discounts on consumer durables, such as televisions, radios and white goods during the 1950s and '60s.⁹² At Marshall Field's department store in Chicago employees could reap even greater bargains in a special 'Employees' Shop'. This shop, which was not accessible to customers, offered employees special sales on surplus or end-of-season merchandise, with bargains as low as ten per cent of shop floor prices.⁹³ Through such sales, Marshall Field's staff could have for themselves the goods they daily sold to wealthier customers.

A significant incentive for retail employers to implement employee discount policies was to improve salesperson's first-hand knowledge of store merchandise. Indeed, respondents to the NRMA survey rated improving employee belief in store merchandise as a primary reason for implementing staff discounts.⁹⁴ Store managers were intensely aware that customers depended on salespeople for knowledge about the merchandise they sought to purchase. Managers expected that in return for the privilege of purchasing goods of quality beyond their buying power, employees would display a 'genuine', heart-felt belief in store goods that would contagiously infect customers. (See Figure 2.11.) In effect, uptake of employee discount privileges became a means for simultaneously securing customer loyalties and testing employee loyalties. As a JC Penney column, aptly entitled 'Fifth Columnists?', contended:

Every piece of merchandise that you buy from our enemies (competitors) is a knife thrust into the hand that is feeding and clothing you; in other words, you are building up the enemies' business with the life blood of your own organization. Build up your own business by buying your own merchandise and bolster up your sales talks to

⁹² *Retail Employee Discounts*, 1, 10, 44. Also, 'Women's Dress Regulations for Summer,' Notice no. 850, 17 March 1945; 'Women's Dress Standards,' Notice No. 954, 2 Sept. 1947; 'Exceptions to Twenty Percent Discount to Employees,' Notice no. 1267, 27 Sept. 1957 and Notice no. 1311, 17 April 1959, *Retail Executive Office Notices*, MFA. For an intricate discussion behind the rationale of different discounts for different goods, see 'The Partnership Discount: Overheard in Any Branch,' *GJLP* 38 (21 April 1956), 262-263.

⁹³ 'Employees' Shop,' *FG*, 16 (25 Oct. 1948), 6. See also 'Employees Only: You Can't Beat This—Cashmeres for \$12.95,' *For-ward* 2 (Aug. 1957), 2.

⁹⁴ *Retail Employee Discounts*, 1.

Figure 2.11. Knowing the goods



R. H. MACY & CO., INC., NEW YORK

A thorough knowledge of your merchandise is essential for sales effectiveness. Tim will probably buy a rod and reel himself after he finishes examining his product carefully. His knowledge will enable him to make a great many sales.

Donald K. Beckley and William B. Logan, *The Retail Salesperson at Work* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1948), 207.

Mr. Customer with the confidence and testimonial that you wear it yourself.⁹⁵

The extent to which staff members shopped away from their store of employment or abused their discount privileges became one measure of company disloyalty in the American trade press.⁹⁶

In addition to improving employees' *functional loyalties* by giving them incentive to familiarise themselves with store merchandise, rules of access for employee discounts encouraged long-term *fundamental loyalties* among employees as well. Some stores encouraged both employee and consumer loyalties among the ranks of temporary workers, on whom stores depended for holiday service, by offering discounts which took immediate effect for seasonal, contingent, part-time and short-term employees. A particular target here were potential Christmas employees who could be recruited with the attraction of discounts on their Christmas shopping. The NRMA survey of 1965 demonstrated that a full 55 per cent of department store employers surveyed offered immediate discounts for employees. However, nearly a quarter of department store employers had a two-week waiting period, while the remainder implemented longer trial periods.⁹⁷ More importantly, most stores increased the amount of store discount according to length of service. At the John Lewis Partnership from 1949, full-time Partners with three years' employment in the Partnership and part-time Partners with the equivalent of three years' service received a discount of 16 2/3 per cent, fully twice that of Partners with less than three years' service.⁹⁸

British and American retail employers were keen to use discount policies to solicit loyalties to the store not only from employees, but from employees' families as well. In the NRMA study, 96 per cent of the department stores surveyed reported offering the spouses and children of employees the same discount as employees themselves received.⁹⁹ Similar statistics are not available for Britain, but at the John Lewis Partnership, employees' spouses and dependent children received the same discount as Partners, as did families of employees at

⁹⁵ 'Fifth Columnists?' *PD* 5 (Dec. 1940), 2.

⁹⁶ 'Protect Your Discount Privilege,' *SC* 53 (Nov. 1962), 6; Evelyn Dawn Fraser, 'Inside Information for Retailers: A Study of Employee Attitudes,' *JR* 30 (Spring 1954), 21-29, 44, p. 23.

⁹⁷ *Retail Employee Discounts*, 57.

⁹⁸ 'The Council,' *GJLP* 31 (July 1949), 310-312. 'Partnership Discount,' *GJLP* 36 (18 Sept. 1954), 700.

⁹⁹ *Retail Employee Discounts*, 40-42.

James Howell's department store in Cardiff.¹⁰⁰ Through such generous discount policies, department and variety store employers aimed not only to secure loyalties from employees' family members as consumers, but to make continued retail employment the precondition for the standard of living employees and their families enjoyed. Employee discounts co-ordinated nicely with retail managers' continual attempts to intertwine employees' family and company loyalties insofar as discounts could expand employee purchasing power and make a relatively poor individual wage more viable as a family wage.

When promoting store discounts and other financial benefits, retail publication editors studiously avoided linking employees' standard of living to retail wages, which were notoriously low. Instead they promoted financial benefits that improved with job tenure as the key to material success for both employee and family. Retailers were particularly keen to make that point for male personnel. One Marshall Field's pamphlet on employee discount portrayed the discount as the foundation of a male employee's ability to support a family and retire gracefully into old age.¹⁰¹ (See Figure 2.12.) Indeed, discount policies often favoured married male employees by allowing their wives to purchase on discount, while disallowing similar purchases by female employees' working husbands.¹⁰² Similarly, promotions for the Penney's Thrift Plan routinely targeted men, although both men and women could participate. One Penney's columnist emphasised that 'The Penney Thrift and Profit-Sharing Retirement Fund Plan bolsters each associate's feeling of safety for his own and his family's future.' Lest the gendered undertones of the message remain unclear, the drawing accompanying the column depicted a well-dressed man, woman and two bouncing children relaxing together with the wife declaring 'I'm glad you work for Penney's.'¹⁰³

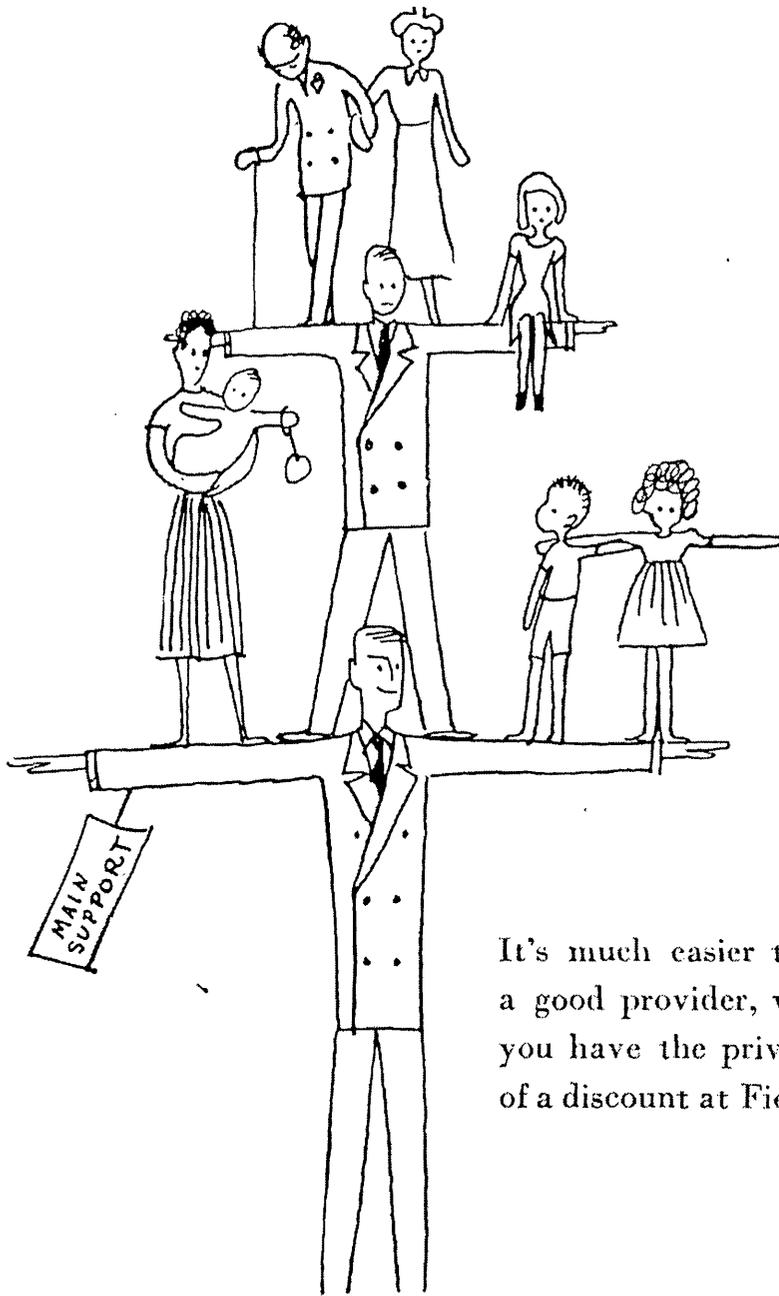
The most paternalistic aspects of staff discount policies were the accompanying regulations as to when, where and how much employees could buy. The NRMA study found that even in 1965, 20 per cent of the department stores in the survey limited the amount employees could purchase with a discount,

¹⁰⁰ 'Partnership Discount: Overheard,' 262-263. James Howell & Co. Staff Rules Book, 1960s, HF14/4/9, UGA.

¹⁰¹ *Your Discount*, (Chicago: Marshall Field & Co., 1947/48), 7.

¹⁰² *Your Discount* (Chicago: Marshall Fields, 1947, 1948, 1957), 11, MFA.

Figure 2.12. The good provider



It's much easier to be
a good provider, when
you have the privilege
of a discount at Field's.

Your Discount (Chicago: Marshall Field & Company, 1947-48), 7. Courtesy of Marshall Field's archive.

so as to discourage buying on credit and encourage financial responsibility.¹⁰⁴ Presumably this also helped to address another major concern of retail employers that employees would purchase goods on discount and then sell them on, making an illegal commission in the process.¹⁰⁵ In addition to limiting the amount employees could purchase, staff rules books also frequently limited the hours in which employees could shop, even on their days off, so not to interfere with the peak selling periods when 'real' customers took precedence. For example, at Harrods in 1940, staff shopping hours were weekdays from 9 to 10:30 a.m. and Saturdays from 9 to 10 a.m., with shopping during busy, understaffed lunch hours explicitly forbidden.¹⁰⁶ Employers intended other limits to staff shopping habits to curtail shoplifting by employees.¹⁰⁷ In many British stores, including Harrods and Howell's, staff were only allowed to enter or leave the store through the staff entrance. This was in large part a consequence of rules requiring staff to send their purchases to a Staff Parcel Office near the Staff Exit, where parcels could be stored away from the sales floor and collected at the end of the day.¹⁰⁸ *Department Store Economist* studies conducted in the late 1940s showed that such regulations were common to American department stores as well.¹⁰⁹ Even though staff discounts allowed shopworkers to buy the same goods they sold to customers then, they were not guaranteed the same service and privileges customers received. (See Figure 2.13.)

In sum, the employee discount as one form of material paternalism in British and American retail offered both employers and employees distinct advantages. Employers could look to the discount to encourage *functional loyalties* among employees who could promote the store's goods because they had used those goods themselves, and *fundamental loyalties* from employees whose

¹⁰³ 'Penney Associates Are Family Folks,' *PD* 19 (Oct. 1953), 2. On the gendering of welfare benefits, see Tone, *Business of Benevolence*, 226-244.

¹⁰⁴ *Retail Employee Discount*, 67.

¹⁰⁵ 'Partnership Discount: Overheard,' 262-263.

¹⁰⁶ *Harrods and You* (London: Harrods, c. 1940), 4. See also 'Employee Shopping Hours,' Notice No. 1005, 1 Sept. 1949, *Retail Executive Office Notices*, MFA.

¹⁰⁷ On concern with employee shoplifting, see Thomas J. Fitzmaurice and Herman Radolf, 'Preventing Theft in Retail Stores,' *JR* 37 (Summer 1961), 1-8. Norman Jaspan, 'Watch Out for That Thief,' *Stores* 52 (July 1970), 4-7, 41. 'Employees' Mass Thefts,' *DR* (26 Jan. 1952), 9. 'A Sad Reflection,' *Kenbar* 2 (1952), 24, HF51/5/5/23, UGA.

¹⁰⁸ *Harrods and You*, 3, 4. Staff Rules, James Howell & Co., Cardiff, c. 1960, 13, HF14/4/9, UGA. Such rules were liberalised at the John Lewis Partnership in 1954, 'Amendment to the Rules,' *GJLP* 36 (18 Sept. 1954), 700.

2.13. Serving the saleswoman

**WHEN YOU'RE AN EMPLOYEE-CUSTOMER,
WHICH DO YOU PREFER?**



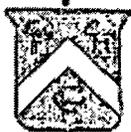
...the brush-off

Getting the cold shoulder and well-known
albeit treatment (when you've prop-
erly using employe shopping hours)
because you're obviously "in the house."



...on-the-beam service

Getting the same thoughtful
service you give to outside customers.
Being treated like a friend instead of
public enemy No. 1.



TREAT 'EM RIGHT-EMPLOYEES ARE GOOD CUSTOMERS!

They boost your sales!

They save you credits!

They save you work!

Stores had constantly to remind salespeople to treat other staff well when they were on the sales floor as customers.

Field Glass 11 (31 Jan. 1944), 2.

exit could be discouraged by threatening loss of the consumer lifestyle the discount enabled. Furthermore, as the NRDGA Personnel Group argued in 1940, employee discount could help improve employee relations, because 'the opportunity to select merchandise before the public or to obtain bargain rates gives the employee a sense of having a privileged position, which tends to heighten morale.'¹¹⁰ For their part, shopworkers and their families benefited from staff discount because it extended their buying power, and possibly improved their social class status, insofar as such status depended on 'conspicuous consumption' of goods they could not otherwise afford.¹¹¹ Because of regulations as to how much, when and how employees could buy, however, the benefits of the staff discount were not without limit.

In addition to offering financial benefits such as employee discounts, pensions and savings plans, many department stores at mid-century still engaged in the practices of nineteenth-century 'classic paternalism', in which executives sustained a sense of moral responsibility for protecting and providing for employees outside of the workplace. One of the common symbols of 'classic paternalism' according to Bradley was employer involvement in the provision of housing. Although the living-in system largely died out in Britain in the inter-war period, it continued in discretionary form in some stores. For example, in the 1950s, Barkers department store in London still offered subsidised housing for female staff at Kensington Square, accommodating almost 100 women. The nine most senior of these women, with combined service of 231 years in the company, rented 'unfurnished flats, and therefore enjoy, what every woman loves—to be able to buy and arrange her own furniture, and to utilise all her own ideas into the making of a real home'. Lest employees forget, the author of the article describing this housing reminded readers that 'All these, and many other amenities, are due to the generosity of our Chairman, and his co-directors.'¹¹² Until at least 1946 the John Lewis Partnership also provided subsidised housing to

¹⁰⁹ 'Routine for Store Purchases by Employees,' *DSE* 11 (Dec. 1948), 94-95, 98; 'Stores Report on Methods Used For Handling Employee Purchases,' *DSE* 12 (May 1949), 24, 30-31.

¹¹⁰ *The Retail Personnel Primer* (New York: NRDGA, 1940), 140.

¹¹¹ Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*, 33-40, 60-80.

¹¹² "'Our Family" At Home,' *Kenbar* 2 (July 1951), HF51/5/5/14, UGA.

the most valuable of its Partners in close proximity either to work or to the Partnership's sporting grounds.¹¹³

The Drapers' Chamber of Trade, Britain's leading dry goods retail organisation, also provided housing for long-term retired employees in its Cottage Homes where former shopworkers could live rent and maintenance free, each in their own home with their own gardens. The first Drapers' Cottage Homes were constructed in 1897 on the Mill Hill Estate outside of London after James C. Marshall of Marshall & Snelgrove's department store donated land for that purpose. However, the demand for and provision of these homes continued to grow at mid-century, leading to the construction of new Cottage Homes in Leylands near Derby, the extension of the Mill Hill estate in 1960, and the construction of a Scottish Cottage Homes estate outside Glasgow in the mid-1960s.¹¹⁴ At least two of these estates remain operational today. Paternalism in its classic form is hardly a thing of the past.

By the post-war period, some British department stores had moved on from subsidising housing for female employees to subsidising loans for valued male employees toward the purchase of new homes. In 1954 the board of directors at Hugh Lauder's store in Kilmarnock assisted one of their male buyers in securing a loan to purchase a house. However, they did not pass up the opportunity to make provision of this loan contingent on evidence of *functional loyalty*. Before the employee could receive his loan, the board decided that he had to 'take immediate steps to place his personal financial affairs in order' and 'apply himself wholeheartedly and efficiently to his employment as Buyer of the Men's and Boys' Wear Departments'. This he apparently did with verve, as his loan was approved shortly thereafter.¹¹⁵

Such concern for the welfare and economic stability of employees was evident in American retail as well. A survey of 98 American department stores with reputable personnel programmes in 1957 found that 62 per cent of these

¹¹³ 'Allocation of Houses, Flats and Rooms,' *GJLP* 28 (9 Feb. 1946), 14-15.

¹¹⁴ Donald Cave, 'The Cottage Homes at Work,' *GJLP* 42 (10 Dec. 1960), 1065-1066. Alison Adburgham, 'Old Age in Tranquility,' *HG* 47 (Feb. 1962), 67-68.

¹¹⁵ Notes from 8 March, 27 Aug., 15 Sept. 1954, 1953-61 Minute Book, Hugh Lauder & Co. Ltd, Kilmarnock, HF75/1/1, UGA. See also, 'The Costs of House Purchase,' *GJLP* 31 (10 Dec. 1949), 540.

stores assisted employees with locating appropriate living quarters.¹¹⁶ Many American department stores also sponsored staff banks that would provide loans for further education, home repairs and alterations, mortgage payments, and so on. In 1945, the Marshall Field's Employees' Credit Union advertised these privileges to staff with the proclamation 'There's no need to leave the store in search of financial help!'¹¹⁷ Just as early industrial employers had sought to provide all that their employees needed to sustain a respectable way of life, so too did many major department store employers in both Britain and America seek to provide all that their employees sought in order to provide a middle-class standard of living for themselves and their families.

The housing assistance offered shopworkers by both British and American department stores constituted more than simple, straightforward paternalism. By helping female employees to create their own homes and helping male employees to purchase new homes, company directors rewarded loyal employees with the security other workers would only find in well-paid employment. This security was, of course, contingent on continued employment in the store offering such benefits, which provided implicit penalties on exit for those who would lose not only their jobs but their homes and their lifestyles if they left retail work. Furthermore, housing provisions helped to secure for employees a domestic atmosphere conducive to cultivation of middle-class respectability. The pictures accompanying coverage of Barkers' housing for female employees in their staff magazine did not portray saleswomen engaged in disorderly leisure, but instead pictured their clean, orderly rooms, the cultivated garden in which they lounged, the piano at which they practised, and the matron who provided for them all the comforts of home.¹¹⁸

Financial benefits also helped to provide the moral basis on which employers could hope to build *ideological loyalties*. For men who received assistance with home loans, the move toward property ownership and the financial conservatism demanded by it provided the potential basis on which the convergence of employers' and employees' *ideological loyalties* could take place.

¹¹⁶ 'Personnel Practices in 98 Department Stores,' *Stores* 39 (April 1957), 51-55. On housing provision in nineteenth-century industrial America, see Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism*, 38-51.

¹¹⁷ 'Financial Problems?' *FG* 12 (15 Jan. 1945), 3.

¹¹⁸ "'Our Family'", 2.

Private property and personal financial responsibility were, after all, two of the fundamental tenets of the private enterprise system to which most American retailers and Britain's more conservative retailers adhered. The Penney's Thrift Plan also privileged the values of free enterprise insofar as it mirrored a long tradition of paternalist benefits that sought to inculcate the principles of the self-made man. It was important in that sense that the company only provided financial reward to those who consciously joined the Thrift Plan and who deliberately put aside the amount they themselves decided to save. Summing up the ethic of the plan, one columnist argued, 'In a land of free enterprise, Penney's is a free enterprise in which you, yourself, can have free enterprise—set your own goal—enjoy the benefits of your own thinking and hustling.'¹¹⁹ (See Figure 2.14.) On the pension fund and other benefits provided at Marshall Field's, Chairman Hughston McBain argued that, 'When an employe [sic] can see that the American business system pays off to him individually, he is no longer susceptible to the false lure of the social collectivists and Communists.'¹²⁰ Altogether then, financial benefits in British and American department and variety stores encouraged employees to feel secure in the knowledge that they would be protected, not by trade unions or state provision, but by the generosity of employers and by their own hard work and enduring loyalty.

The redevelopment of social, cultural and material benefits programmes in department stores and some variety stores in the 1940s and '50s demonstrated that paternalism in its 'classic' and 'factory' forms was still viable and vibrant in the British and American retail sectors. By 1963, a *Field Glass* editorialist could describe in detail the insular community of the Marshall Field's store, which had, like many other stores of its time, its own credit union, bowling league, Choral Society, library, medical clinic, softball and golf tournaments, Senior Citizens group, charity fund-raising community campaigns and, most importantly, a store newspaper useful for building a sense of community around these activities. The store had become a social centre in itself where employees could find 'that where we work is, in a sense, our home town—a busy community where people share

¹¹⁹ 'How Penney Sales Associates Can Combine Bonus Plan and Thrift Plan And Go Places, Staying with Penney's,' *PD* 16 (Sept. 1951), 2. See also 'Our Thrift Now Means More,' *PD* 18 (June 1953), 2.

¹²⁰ Newspaper clipping from unknown source, c. 1951/52, 'Training By Jupiter' folder in 'Training Division' folder, MFA.

Figure 2.14. The self-made man



Destination Sighted!

JC Penney's continually reminded its employees that they had the means at their fingertips to secure the American dream through hard work, thrift and foresight.

Pay Day 12 (July 1947), 2.

responsibilities as well as interests and amusements'.¹²¹ Marshall Field's had secured what many British and American retail executives envied: an all-encompassing community through which employees could find moral support, family security and refined social status.

The Decline of Paternalism? Change and Continuity, Successes and Failures

This analysis has focused so far on the continuity of paternalism in British and American retail through the early post-war years. The main point has been to demonstrate that the Second World War and the labour market conditions immediately afterwards provided a context in which the paternalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could easily be revived. But to say that there was continuity in the purpose and format of retail paternalism is not to suggest that there was no change. In fact, even as many retail employers developed and expanded their paternalist social and financial benefits programmes, they simultaneously expressed discomfort with the explicit power dynamics of paternalism, and sensitivity to employee resentment of paternalist rhetoric. This paradoxical approach to paternalism was exemplified by an article in the *Bulletin of the National Retail Dry Goods Association* in 1947 entitled 'Employee Welfare Without Paternalism'. The article continually emphasised that employee input had been solicited at every step of the way in the implementation of new provisions for employees at Mandel Brothers' store, then went on to describe these provisions: a staff cafeteria, library, lounge space, employee hospital and retirement plans—all elements of traditional paternalist programmes.¹²² Clearly there was some tension at mid-century between the continuation of paternalism in its rhetorical versus practical forms.

The rhetoric of family was problematised in the mid-twentieth century by the paternalistic images it invoked just as retail managers were attempting to denude retail institutions of their reputations as patriarchal, retrogressive employers. The ambiguity expressed by department store managers and directors over the implications of the family metaphor and its paternalist overtones was best expressed by John Spedan Lewis in response to an employee who questioned the

¹²¹ 'Our Town,' *FG* 30 (4 March 1963), 2.

¹²² Marc Jonas, 'Employee Welfare Without Paternalism,' *BNRDGA* 29 (Aug. 1947), 30-31.

hierarchy implicit in the Partnership's common use of family rhetoric in 1940. On the one hand, Lewis upheld the family/firm analogy, arguing that:

To compare the Partnership to a family seems to me to be the best way of expressing the idea that the members of such an organisation, as we are building up, should stand by each other in trouble, agree that every member of the community ought to have a minimum wage, provide equally for everybody certain pleasures, such as sports grounds and dancing, and so forth.

On the other hand, Lewis expressed concern over the reception this family rhetoric might meet with in the public realm of social reformers, customers and future employees when he advised his readers that:

It is, I think, important that the members of the Partnership shall not get into their own heads or spread in the world outside a notion that ours is what is commonly called a patriarchal organisation. [. . .] we ought all to be careful that members of the Partnership do not get into their own heads or give to outsiders an idea of our organisation that they would be inclined to resent as an unnecessary and therefore improper restriction of individual freedom.¹²³

Few department store chairmen of this period could have been described as more patriarchal than John Spedan Lewis, who used the columns of the Partnership's *Gazette* to give lengthy lectures on domestic and world politics, and on the correctness or incorrectness of employee opinions on a range of topics. However, Lewis expressed discomfort at an early stage, if not with the nature of his position, at least with the way Partners *perceived* his position. In turn, he offered a revised version of the retail house line, focusing on the family's potential for democratic community and 'social reform'. Lewis's revised version of family rhetoric placed an emphasis on the Partnership as such, and on 'the relations of its members among themselves as individuals'. This new family rhetoric was an early adaptation of the company-as-team metaphor that would gradually supersede the language of the retail 'family' and 'house' in even the most established department stores—a process examined further in Chapter Three.¹²⁴

The rhetoric of family also became less tenable with the decline of the family firm. The format of employee magazines in family-owned or family-run

¹²³ 'The Partnership As A Family,' *GJLP* 22 (17 Feb. 1940), 72-73.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

stores was meant to highlight the rhetorical similarities between the natural family of the home and the constructed one of the store. In the pages of house organs, the boundaries between House and home were blurred where the genuine family met the rhetorical one, pictures of parents and children on one page, and stories of the ever-expanding retail family on the next. In a quite explicit example, the Harrods 'Family Portraits' series ran either facing or bordering another column entitled 'Meet the Family', which told the individual histories of the partner stores in the Harrods group.¹²⁵ Paradoxically, it was the constant addition of new partner stores through acquisition or construction in both British and American retail in the 1950s and '60s that made the rhetorical association between family and store increasingly tenuous. It was in large part the tension between the insular community of the retail family described in staff magazines and the reality of the ever-growing buying group that made the rhetoric of family togetherness both fragile and contested.

On the whole, the vocabulary of family rhetoric remained a viable means for invoking an ethic of familiarity, reciprocity, and natural hierarchy in store publications and activities through the early post-war years. However, for most department stores the family metaphor had ceased to be the dominant discourse for describing store labour relations and recruiting employee loyalties by the early 1960s. It had been marginalised by a growing discourse of teamwork that focused less on the store as a social organisation, and more on the store as a business. This is not to say that retail paternalism—of which family rhetoric was a discursive apparatus—was itself dead. In fact, the system of practical benefits that shored up the ethic of reciprocity, on which the company-as-family metaphor implicitly depended, remained vibrant through at least the 1960s.

* * *

The question that remains is how successful were employers in their efforts to capture employees' *fundamental*, *functional* and *ideological loyalties* through paternalism? Of course, this is very difficult to determine, given the general lack of historical sources offering unregulated or unedited access to shopworkers' own words. However, oral histories suggest that rhetorical and social paternalism helped some employers to secure and maintain employees' *fundamental loyalties*.

¹²⁵ 'Family Portraits' and 'Meet the Family,' *HG* 34 (May 1949), 79-80.

Consider this dialogue between two former employees of Porteous, Mitchell and Braun's department store in Portland, Maine:

1) Do you remember the big plaque over the elevator in Porteous? It referred to the personnel as members of their family.

2) Yeah.

1) That's the way they wanted. It was a family owned store . . . that was the plaque they had up there and all the people felt the same, that they were members of their family.

2) They were a family operation and they treated you as family. A whole different world.

1) The lowest paying store in the city though.¹²⁶

Apparently paternalism in this store at that time was more rhetorical or social than material, but that did not seem to interfere with the first interviewee's loyalties, as she stayed on for 17 years in the same position. The fondness with which these interviewees remembered their employer's paternalism was shared by other employees of that firm.¹²⁷ However, there were always others, like the Partner who prompted John Spedan Lewis's letter described above, who resented family rhetoric and the power relations it implied.

For some shopworkers, *fundamental loyalties* were explicitly connected to paternalist benefit systems. In 1951, Lewis unwittingly tested Partners' *fundamental loyalties* as expressed through company spirit when he described a discussion with someone who accused the Bon Marché branch of the Partnership in Brixton of lacking in 'Partnership spirit'. In subsequent issues the *Gazette* published no fewer than thirteen letters—an unusually high number of responses even by the *Gazette*'s standards—articulating the offence taken by Bon Marché staff, and defending the company spirit of employees at that branch. Connecting his own loyalty to the Partnership's social and material benefits, one respondent argued that, 'The Partnership provides us with the goods we sell, with our work-mates and often our leisure-time companions, even with the Staff dress we wear, the flats in which we live, and the language we speak. In it, in short, we move and have our being.'¹²⁸ For at least some employees in some stores then, paternalist

¹²⁶ Author's interview with 83 year old woman and 81 year old man, 8 August 2002, in author's possession.

¹²⁷ Authors interviews with Porteous former employees, 1-2, 8-9 August 2002, in author's possession.

¹²⁸ 'Bon Marché and Partnership Spirit,' *GJLP* 33 (7 April 1951), 109. See also other letters and articles of the same title, *GJLP* 33 (24 March 1951), 87; 33 (31 March 1951), 96-97.

benefit systems did help to foster *fundamental loyalties* as expressed through identification with and investment in company culture.

The same *Gazette* correspondent also used employee participation in 'Partnership activities from poetry reading to ping-pong' as proof that loyalty in his branch was high.¹²⁹ Applying this measure of *fundamental loyalty* to other stores produces conflicting conclusions. On the one hand, the continual coverage of staff sports teams, theatre productions and club activities in both British and American retail house organs speaks to the fact that almost every store had at least a few shopworkers who actively identified with or expressed loyalty to their store community. On the other hand, staff magazine editors commonly bemoaned the decline of staff participation in organised extracurricular activities. Describing the Barkers Group Sports Day of 1954, one participant noted his sadness at the end of the day when he wondered, 'where was the staff today?' and lamented, 'More is the pity that so few take advantage of the privileges and facilities which are offered.'¹³⁰ And as Andrea Tone has pointed out, even participation in employer-sponsored activities did not necessarily mean deep-seated unquestioning loyalty on the part of employees.¹³¹ It must be continually emphasised then, that shopworkers' experience with the retail house and family was not a singular one: there were those who participated in employer-organised activities and events and used the rhetoric of family to describe their relationship to the store community, and there were always others who chose not to participate in extracurricular activities at all or expressed open resentment of the paternalist family model of corporate culture.

Another measure of *fundamental loyalty* is staff turnover rates. While appealing, the quantitative nature of this measure does not compensate for its complexity. Labour turnover rates were contingent on a number of factors, including the periodisation of peak selling periods, long-term weather conditions and other factors that influenced hiring and firing patterns, as well as labour market conditions. However, some stores directly connected implementation or elaboration of benefit systems to notable declines in labour turnover. For example, Marks and Spencer's attributed a decline in labour turnover from 69 per

¹²⁹ 'Bon Marché and Partnership Spirit,' 109.

¹³⁰ 'A Stranger at Southfields,' *Kenbar* 4 (Oct. 1954), 10, HF51/5/5/35, UGA.

¹³¹ Tone, *Business of Benevolence*, 212.

cent in 1932 to 26 per cent in 1937 to implementation of a comprehensive welfare scheme in 1933.¹³² It is important to note, however, that even for those employees of short tenure, loyalty did not necessarily end upon departure from store employment. The persistence of some employees' *fundamental loyalties* to their stores and store communities can be demonstrated by the fact that many shopworkers maintained friendships with other employees and continued to shop loyally at the store of their employment long after their own departure.¹³³

The relationship between paternalism and *functional* or *ideological loyalties* is more difficult to characterise. The ethic of reciprocity store directors sought to elicit through benefits programmes was explicitly targeted at raising productivity. Many American stores, including Strawbridge & Clothier, JC Penney and Halle Brothers in Cleveland, published company reports for employees setting out the exact amount that the company had provided for employees in terms of payroll and benefits, and the exact amount employees had in turn brought into the company through sales.¹³⁴ At company dinners and in the pages of staff magazines, company directors continually reinforced the reciprocal connection between the benefits employers provided and the *functional loyalties* they expected from employees in return. For example, in 1963 John Barr, Chairman of the Montgomery Wards chain, wrote that, 'As individuals, our personal success—our compensation, our benefits, our security—is dependent upon the success of our Company. Thus, the opportunity we individually have to contribute our own bit towards improvement of the Company's performance is also an opportunity to better our own personal position.'¹³⁵ Similarly, a *Journal of Retailing* guideline to ideal shareholder/manager/employee systems of reciprocity in retail listed various fringe benefits as employee rights in one column, then listed among employee obligations: 'be a "booster" for the store at all times—during and after store hours'; 'do extra chores willingly'; and 'give an honest day's work'.¹³⁶ Clearly

¹³² *Staff Management News* 1 (June 1938), 1, K1/1, M&SA.

¹³³ Author's interviews with female Personnel worker, 25 June 2001; and with female sales clerk and window dresser, 8 July 2001, both employed during World War II, transcripts in author's possession.

¹³⁴ 'Facts for Employees,' *Stores* 34 (Nov. 1952), 53. 'Gold Mine of Benefits,' *SC* 40 (April-May 1958), 8-9. 'Penney's Did It Again in 1950—Success!' *PD* 15 (May 1951), 8.

¹³⁵ '1963—A Year of Opportunity,' *For-ward* 7 (Jan. 1963), 1. See also 'Sir Richard at First Meeting of 1951 Staff Council,' *HG* 36 (June 1951), 177-179.

¹³⁶ Irving Godenthal, 'A Blueprint for an Effective and Happy Organization,' *JR* 24 (April 1948), 52-53.

employers expected that paternalist benefit systems would instil not only *fundamental* but *functional loyalties* as well.

It seems that employers' expectations were in that respect misguided. The problem for employers was that rather than buying into the reciprocal bargain on the terms set out by their companies, many employees negotiated the benefit system on their own terms. In her study, Mandell argued that in the early twentieth century, 'To the consternation of many employers, their workers reaped the benefits of welfare work, but did not reciprocate with either greater loyalty or productivity', because workers looked on benefits as rights.¹³⁷ The same might be said of some shopworkers at mid-century. The staff discount was one benefit commonly taken for granted among shop staff, because it was so widespread in industry practice. In 1949, one 'Counter Hand' wrote to the House of Fraser's Cavendish House store magazine complaining about the treatment of staff as customers and about problems receiving discount. Under the pseudonym 'Fair Play' this employee wrote 'Surely in these days of shortage of staff it is not too much to expect discount as an additional incentive to our work.'¹³⁸ Retailers' persistent complaints about productivity, salesmanship and quality of service, described further in the next chapter, indicate that in most cases paternalist benefits were not alone sufficient for soliciting *functional loyalties*.

Mandell argued that earlier employer efforts at soliciting *functional loyalties* through welfare programmes failed because employers had not successfully inculcated in employees the ethic of the 'self-made man'.¹³⁹ The extent of such *ideological loyalties* among shopworkers at mid-century is difficult to determine, given the lack of available evidence. However, in the next chapter further consideration will be given to the possibility that such loyalties were undermined by low wages and the real difficulty of being a 'self-made man'—or woman—in the retail trades by the post-war period.

¹³⁷ Mandell, *Corporation as Family*, 113-120, quote from 115. See also Tone, *Business of Benevolence*, 70-98.

¹³⁸ 'Letters to the Editor,' *Cav Mag* (June 1949), HF12/5/2, UGA. On abuse of discount privilege, see 'Protect Your Discount,' 6.

¹³⁹ Mandell, *Corporation as Family*, 116-118.

Conclusion

The paternalism evident in British and American department stores, and to some extent variety stores, at mid-century was continuous with traditions of 'classic' and 'factory' paternalism originating in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The promise of paternalism for employers at mid-century was not significantly different than it had been for early industrialists; the shaping of middle-class consciousness, and the cultivation of shopworkers' cultural, intellectual and spiritual lives held out the prospect of a more loyal, industrious workforce, informed by an ethic of hard work, moral respectability and deference to hierarchies of authority. A combination of rhetorical and practical paternalism provided employers with many of the elements necessary to the construction of employee loyalties: penalties for exit, subordination of rival loyalties, the construction of interpersonal loyalties, and an ethic of reciprocity.

The social, cultural and material benefits that constituted retail paternalism in the post-war period continued to help deliver the *fundamental loyalties* of some employees. However, factory and classic paternalism lacked one crucial element necessary to the construction of *functional loyalties*: voice. The gradual eclipse of family rhetoric by the team metaphor in retail company cultures was one signal that paternalism was no longer sufficient for meeting the managerial needs of retail employers. Although paternalism continued in many ways, a 'new' managerial style was developing in British and American retail from the 1930s through the '70s that would more directly target employees' *functional loyalties* and begin to help employers meet the challenge of voice. In many ways, this 'new' style fitted well with Harriet Bradley's definition of 'neo-paternalism', but to characterise it singly as paternalism would underestimate the extent to which it diverged from earlier managerial styles. The evolution of new managerial styles meant that although classic and factory paternalism continued in British and American retail, and in department stores particularly, paternalism was no longer the dominant mode of employee relations in stores, but just one of a range of managerial styles aimed at increasing employee loyalties.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 153.

Chapter Three

'The Dignity of Work': 'New' Managerial Style

From the 1930s, British and American retail employers became increasingly aware that basic interpersonal loyalties and welfare benefits would not alone provide for the *functional loyalties* managers so desired from employees. While interpersonal loyalties and long-service benefits may have had some limited effect on decreasing labour turnover, such benefits did little to improve workplace productivity directly. Shopworkers were little different from their industrial counterparts who received their benefits with a sense of right or reward that did not directly correlate with shop floor performance.¹ If this had not been clear to employers in the first decades of the twentieth century, the increased labour activism in Britain and increased retail unionism in America in the late 1930s clarified shopworkers' expectations that their material needs would be met regardless of workplace productivity. In 1935, 32 of America's 36 largest department stores reported no unionisation. By 1949, 22 of those same stores had unionisation in some departments, and 15 were fully organised.² The increase in retail trade unionism in the inter-war years played a major role in spurring American and later British retailers on to develop new methods of management that more directly fulfilled both workers' and employers' needs.³

A second major factor that necessitated change in retail managerial style from the 1930s through the early 1970s was the simultaneous consolidation and expansion of major department and chain store businesses. The inter-war years in both Britain and America marked a period of merger and acquisition in the department store field and of branch expansion in the variety store trade.⁴ The

¹ On workers' feelings of entitlement, see Andrea Tone, *The Business of Benevolence: Industrial Paternalism in Progressive America* (London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 209-212.

² Helen Baker and Robert R. France, *Personnel Administration and Labor Relations in Department Stores: An Analysis of Developments and Practices* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 107.

³ As argued in Baker and France's analysis of changes in American department store personnel policies, *Personnel Administration*.

⁴ On mergers in inter-war American retail, see William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 272-285. In inter-war Britain, Bill Lancaster, *The Department Store: A Social History* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 85-93. The trade unions kept good track of mergers, acquisitions and branch expansion in the department and variety store trades through the post-war years in the following columns: P. C. Hoffman, 'Organising the Distributive Trades,' *ND* 1 (September-October 1947); Joseph Wild, 'The Distributive Trades To-Day,' *ND* 3 (1949); T. W. Cynog-Jones, 'Giants in

increased competition in the dry goods sector following the Second World War meant that British and American department stores would continue the trend of mergers, acquisitions and branch expansion begun in the inter-war years in attempts to consolidate their middle- and upper-class market strongholds and secure economies of scale.⁵ By 1953 Marshall Field's had already constructed five new suburban branches in Chicago, and had acquired control of Frederick and Nelson's department store in Seattle, expanding control beyond their flagship State Street store. Strawbridge & Clothier administered four new suburban branches in addition to their main Philadelphia store by 1961. The John Lewis Partnership in Britain increased from five to twenty stores in 1940 alone. By 1960, the House of Fraser controlled 69 department stores across Britain, with all but the flagship Glasgow store having been acquired between 1936 and 1959.⁶ (See Figure 3.1.)

Meanwhile, the chain store giants engaged in dramatic expansion campaigns from the 1920s through the '60s, with new branches popping up in suburban, rural and urban areas.⁷ Marks & Spencer's experienced much of its growth in the 1930s, with 126 stores in 1927 and 234 twelve years later.⁸ The Co-operative movement extended its reach into the department store field in the immediate post-war years, from 127 department stores in 1946 to 260 in 1955.⁹

Retailing,' *ND* 6-7 (1952-1953); 'Interesting Facts About "Big Business"', *RCA* (intermittently in the 1950s).

⁵ Malcolm P. McNair and Eleanor G. May, *The American Department Store, 1920-1960* (Boston: Harvard University School of Business Administration, 1963), 7-9.

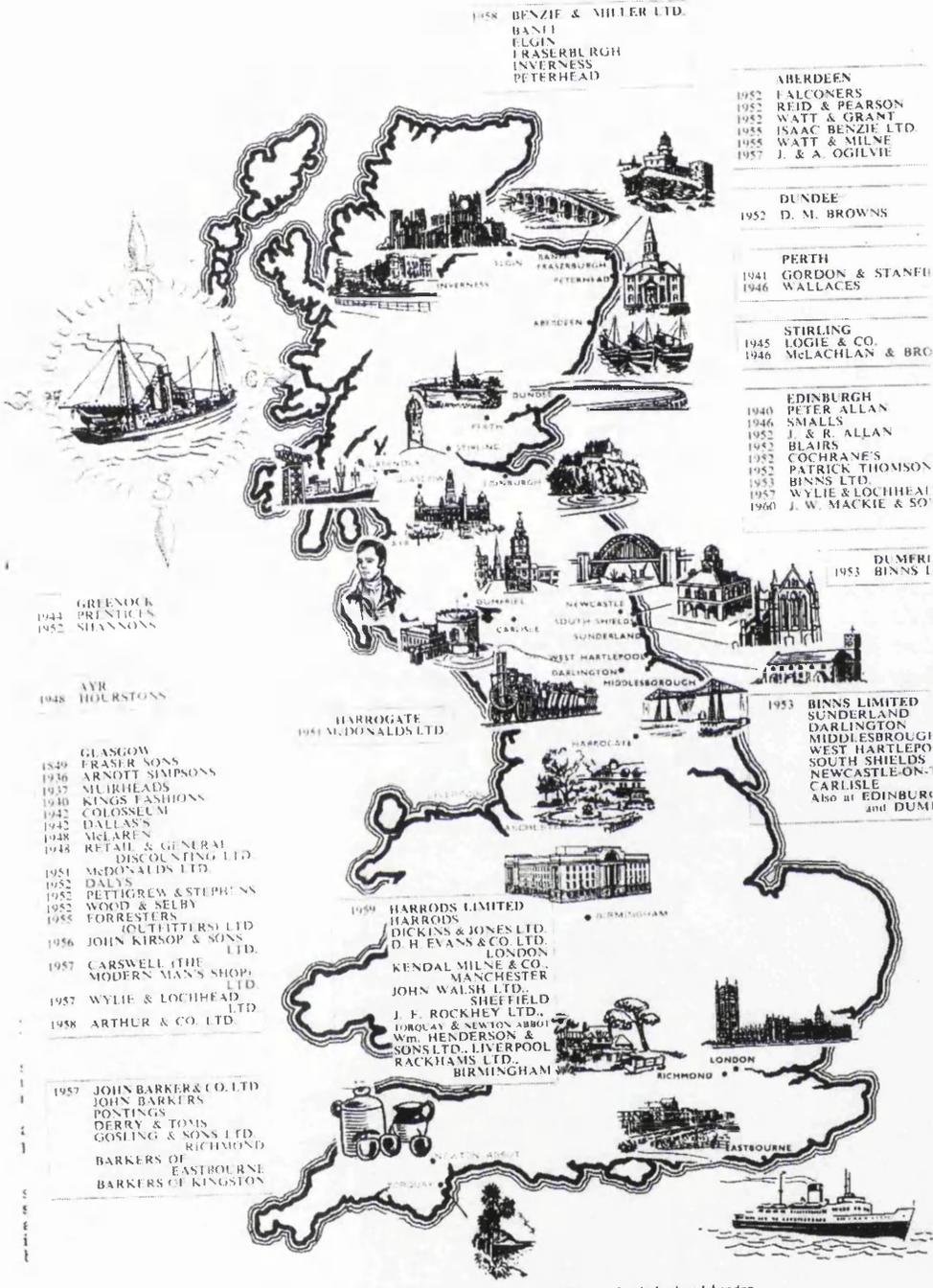
⁶ *In Company*, vol. 2, Christmas 1960, back cover, HF1/8/1/1/1, UGA. 'Reveal Newest Retail Expansion Moves,' *FG*, 21 (21 December 1953), 1. 'Our Fourth and Largest Branch Store,' *SC*, 51 (March 1960), 5. John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares* (London: Staples Press Limited, 1954), 138-139. For a broader overview of the initial adoption of chain store structures and methods by department stores in the US, see E. B. Weiss, *Selling to and Through the New Department Store* (New York: Funk & Wagnall's, 1948), 1-28. For Britain, see Lancaster, *The Department Store*, 85-93.

⁷ For more specific evidence regarding the geographic dispersion of variety store chains in Britain, see Andrew Alexander, Gareth Shaw and Deborah Hodson, 'Regional Variation in the Development of Multiple Retailing in England, 1890-1939,' in John Benson and Laura Ugolini (Eds.), *A Nation of Shopkeepers* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 127-154; in America, 'A Factual Basic Analysis of Retail Trade,' *RCA* 50 (June 1947), 11-13.

⁸ Alexander et al., 'Regional Variations,' 145.

⁹ *Co-operative Shops: A Census of Retail Outlets and Main Services Operated by Co-operative Societies* (Manchester: Co-operative Union Ltd., 1955), 3. For examples of new and expanded British Co-operative dry goods stores in the post-war years, see *Co-operative Architecture, 1945-1959* (Manchester: C.W.S. Printing Works, 1959). On Co-operative ventures into bazaar or variety store trading, see G. A. Holland, *Co-operative Bazaars: New Trade for the Movement*, (Manchester: Co-operative Printing Society, c. 1939); William B. Neville, *Bazaar Trading: A Treatise on the Subject, Specially Written for the Co-operative Movement* (Manchester: Co-operative Union, c. 1935), CA.

Figure 3.1. House of Fraser acquisitions, 1960



Printed by Thomas Reed and Company Limited, Glasgow, Sunderland and London

In Company 2 (Christmas 1960) HF1/8/1/1/1.

economies of scale with regard to personnel. In 1955, American department stores with annual sales of more than \$50 million had *higher* ratios of payroll costs to sales than department stores with less than \$250,000 annual sales. In the same year, variety store chains with annual sales of more than \$50 million had ratios of payroll costs to sales *higher* than department stores in the same category of sales.¹⁷ Clearly, something had to be done to improve productivity in the largest retail companies in order to resolve this paradox of higher relative personnel costs in larger-scale businesses.

A third reason for implementing and improving 'new' managerial styles in retail at mid-century was the confirmation during the Second World War that paternalism alone could not sufficiently elicit employee effort toward higher productivity and better service. Of course, retailers had always been concerned about the quality of service and salesmanship in their stores, but the Second World War exacerbated this concern.¹⁸ (See Figure 3.3.) During the war years, both British and American department and variety store owners complained of the erosion of shop floor salesmanship with less skilled staff and high labour turnover. They attributed the deterioration of selling skill to the seller's market climate of rationing, credit controls and scarcity, where goods practically sold themselves to customers eager to spend higher war-time wages.¹⁹

Customers were not happy either. A *Department Store Economist* survey of 3000 American department store customers in 1943 concluded that, 'In spite of free and frequent deliveries, in spite of limitless credit terms, in spite of fancy wraps and classy toilets, in spite of all the expensive services that push the operating expense up and the profits down, service, to the customer, still means the kind of treatment he or she gets at the salesperson's level.' To that end, one respondent commented that 'The situation is atrocious—clerks are discourteous and rude. Stores after the war with best salespeople will get my business.'²⁰

The problem for retailers and customers was that rather than returning to idyllic (and perhaps imagined) pre-war norms, the 'crisis' of salesmanship only

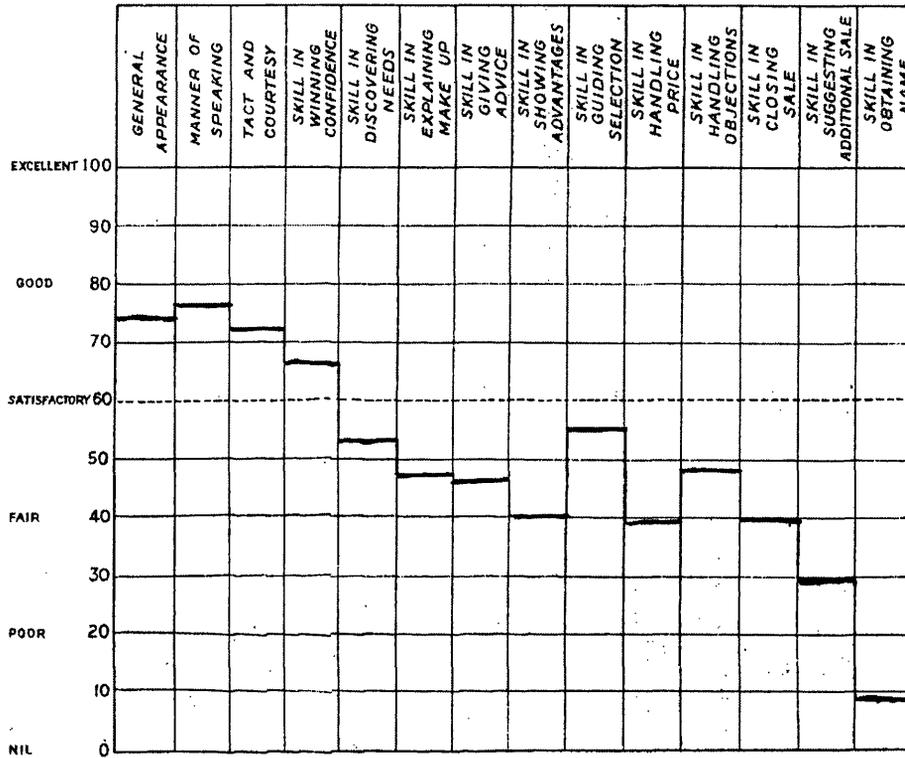
¹⁷ Jules Backman, 'Retail Labor Costs' *JR* 33 (Spring 1957), 5-13, 50.

¹⁸ On pre-war concerns with salesmanship in Britain, see Harold Whitehead & Staff, 'Report on a National Survey of Retail Selling Practices,' 1932, JLP.A. In the US, see Susan Porter Benson, 'The Cinderella of Occupations: Managing the Work of Department Store Saleswomen, 1900-1940,' *Business History Review* 55 (Spring 1981), 1-25.

¹⁹ Rollin Williams, 'Intensified Sales Training for Postwar Period,' *BNRDGA*, 26 (July 1944), 21, 52, 54-55. 'Traders Advised to be More Competitive,' *DR* (1 March 1952), 75.

Figure 3.3. Problems with salesmanship in inter-war Britain

GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION OF RETAIL SELLING EFFICIENCY IN
GREAT BRITAIN
 CONSOLIDATED CHART



This survey from 1932 found poor sales technique on the part of British retail salespeople overall, including department store employees.

Harold Whitehead & Staff, *Report on a National Survey of Retail Selling Practices* (London, 1932), 6.

worsened following the war. In 1952, *Fortune* magazine reported that selling efficiency in the US was not only stagnant but declining, reaching ‘such an abysmal point that upward of \$3 billion annually in potential sales is being lost at the counter through apathy and lack of skill’.²¹ In 1954, the Willmark Service System analyses and other business research surveys reported that fewer salespeople than before the war engaged in ‘suggestive selling’ or ‘trading up’ techniques, and that sales transactions per payroll dollar had decreased from 2.99 transactions per dollar in 1940 to 1.38 in 1951.²² (See Figure 3.4.) In Britain, the *Drapers’ Record* recorded a 22 per cent increase in the number of customers served per assistant between 1938 and 1950. However, the journal attributed that trend to the war-time sellers’ market and concerned itself with the declining value of the average sale and declining performances in salesmanship.²³ One British department store staff manager spoke articulately to the concerns of the trade when he argued that, ‘The will to *serve* the public is certainly lacking in the majority of sales staffs these days, and only assistants with pre-war experience seem to show any interest in good salesmanship.’²⁴ Working against the tide of poor salesmanship and increased business and labour competition, department and variety store retailers alike looked to ‘new’ managerial styles to solicit *functional loyalties* from employees more directly.

A fourth significant explanation for the development of ‘new’ managerial styles in retail in the mid-twentieth century was the contemporaneous development of social scientific theories of workplace behaviour and relationships. In America and Britain the expanding role of trained psychologists in government activity and propaganda during the First and Second World Wars and the Cold War led to an expansion in government support for graduate training

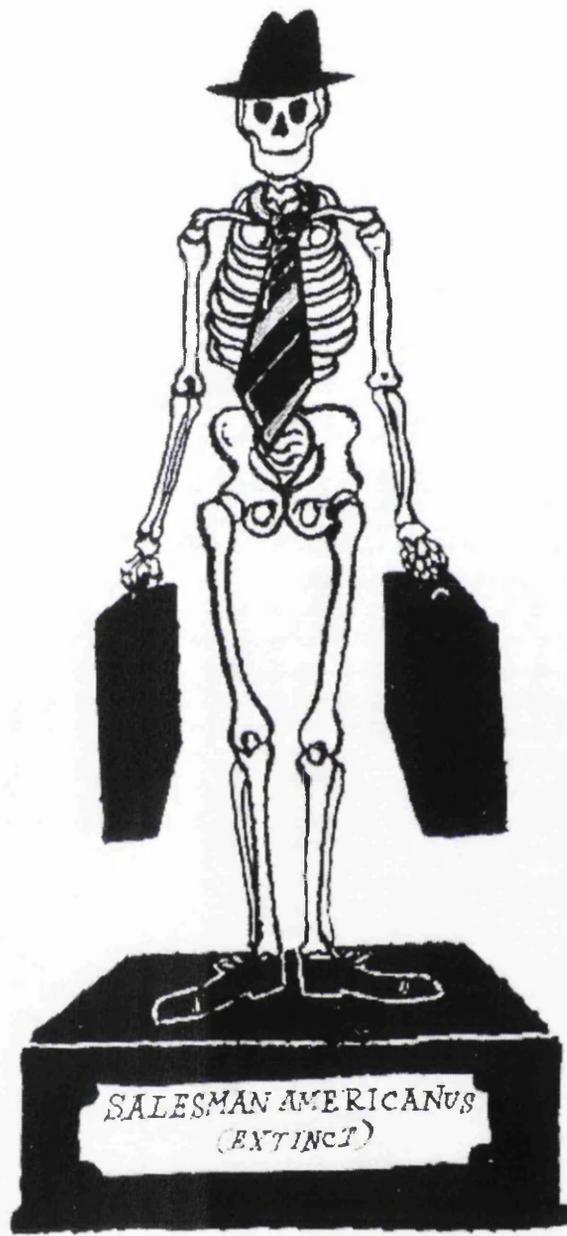
²⁰ ‘Your Customers Speak on Post-War Services!’ *DSE* 6 (December 1943), 10-12.

²¹ ‘What’s Wrong With Retail Salesmanship?’ *Fortune* 46 (July 1952), 79. See also ‘Selling Performances,’ *DSE* 14 (February 1951), 121. The following *Fortune* magazine articles focused not only on retail salespeople, but on travelling salespeople and manufacturing sales forces as well. ‘What’s Wrong,’ 77-80, 146-54. ‘What’s the Matter With American Salesmanship?’ *Fortune*, 40 (September 1949), 67-69, 180-84. ‘Help Wanted: Sales,’ *Fortune*, 45 (May 1952), 100-03, 196-204.

²² It should be noted that the standards for Willmark Service System analyses were based on retailers’ *expectations* for average selling effort—not exactly an objective measure, or a constant measure over time. ‘What’s Wrong,’ 78-80. ‘Salespeople: An Undeveloped Potential,’ *JR* 39 (Winter 1953-1954), 149-156, 196. ‘National Standards of Selling Performance,’ *DSE* 13 (November 1950), 20-21. ‘Selling Performance Slump,’ *DSE* 14 (November 1951), 114. ‘Ira Hayes: “I BEGGED the Clerk to Sell Me a Shirt,”’ *Stores* 44 (April 1962), 19-21.

²³ ‘How to Raise Productivity in Retail Trade,’ *DR* (21 June 1952), 16-17.

Figure 3.4. The death of salesmanship



In 1952, *Fortune* magazine announced the death of salesmanship nationwide in all sales trades, including department and variety stores, travelling salesmen, etc.

Fortune 45 (May 1952), 100.

in the field of psychology, and in turn to growth of the profession.²⁵ This expansion in the psychological profession was reflected in industrial relations with increased interest in the field of industrial psychology in the early post-war years. The theories proposed and research conducted by American and British industrial psychologists directly affected the managerial styles adopted by retail Personnel Departments in America, and later in Britain, as recorded in trade journals.²⁶ Of even greater significance was the development of the employee attitude survey in industry in the late 1920s, which was put to great use in American and British retail from the late 1930s, as will be discussed in more detail below. Together, employee attitude surveys and theories of industrial psychology provided retailers with the 'scientific' information they needed to develop new managerial styles that promised to inspire and more effectively satisfy shopworkers.

In response to higher unionisation rates, the consolidation and expansion of the retail sector, problems with salesmanship, and the growth of sociological and psychological research into retail employee relations, many department and variety store executives introduced and developed new managerial techniques that had been pioneered by industry and progressive retail companies in the inter-war years. These techniques included a shift toward team rhetoric and practice in the workplace, development of human relations programmes, professionalisation of retail employment, and standardisation of job advancement procedures. The sum of these 'new' managerial techniques relied less on the volatile ethic of reciprocity that underlay most paternalist programmes. Instead, these techniques relied heavily on improving employees' real or perceived access to systems of representation through which voice could be exercised. Most importantly, where paternalist managerial strategies had depended on a sentiment of reciprocity to

²⁴ 'How Do They Serve?' *DR* (25 April 1953), 105.

²⁵ On America, see Catherine Lutz, 'Epistemology of the Bunker: The Brainwashed and Other New Subjects of Permanent War,' in Joel Pfister and Nancy Schnog (Eds.), *Inventing the Psychological: Toward a Cultural History of Emotional Life in America* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1997). Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1995), 126-130. On industrial psychology and war in Britain, see Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*, 2nd Edition (London: Free Association, 1999). Graham Richards, *Putting Psychology in its Place: An Introduction From a Critical Historical Perspective* (London: Routledge, 1996), 176-178.

²⁶ For example, 'How to Build Salesman Loyalty,' *Stores* 37 (September 1955), 57-58. Series by Howard B. Jacobson, 'A Motivating Store Environment,' *Stores* 52 (October-December 1970).

induce higher productivity, new managerial styles in retail often explicitly connected personal advancement to workplace performance.

In the post-war years, 'new' managerial style did not replace but supplemented on-going paternalist programmes. Neither did this new style represent significant softening of managerial resolve concerning control of workplace procedures. What it did mean was a shift from the paternalist holistic vision of the employee, which focused on providing for all of the employee's physical and social needs, to the psychological holistic vision of the employee, which focused more on the worker's intellectual and emotional needs. In the post-war years, the success with which department and variety stores supplemented basic paternalist employment benefits with individual self-actualisation through these new managerial styles would determine the degree to which *functional* employee loyalties were forthcoming.

Charting Loyalty: Employee Attitude Surveys

I have no loyalty because I have not been made to feel they need me.
--Shopworker's comment in NRDGA employee attitude survey, 1937²⁷

Over the course of the two decades leading up to the Second World War, retail employers had begun to understand that shopworkers expected more from their work than material benefit alone. As a corollary, managers had begun to suspect that in a profession where productivity depended heavily on the quality of emotional labour performed, the construction and sustenance of *functional loyalties* depended on the extent to which shop work satisfied employees' needs for social acceptance, prestige and self-respect. In the late 1920s consultants to American industry began developing a managerial tool that would transform employee relations from the late 1930s onward. They discovered that surveys of employee attitude and morale could offer managers direct insight into employees' psychological reception of various managerial styles.²⁸

In 1937 the National Retail Dry Goods Association, which represented the interests of many American department, variety and specialty stores, adopted the

²⁷ NRDGA, *Employee Attitude as Affected by Initial Personnel Procedure* (New York: NRDGA, 1937/38), 61.

²⁸ Sanford Jacoby, *Modern Manors: Welfare Capitalism Since the New Deal* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 111-113.

employee attitude survey for use in retail with a survey of 370 selling and non-selling employees in urban department stores. The study showed that shopworkers' loyalties were contingent on the satisfaction of three basic expectations employees held of their employers: job security, maintenance of self-respect, and the presence of an ideal around which loyalty could be constructed.²⁹ The NRDGA's researchers discovered from employees' remarks on questionnaires that employee interest in higher wages was not about spending power per se, but about the status and security such wages imparted, relative to other shopworkers and other employees outside the retail trade. The study concluded that 'granted a decent minimum wage, employees are really more concerned with "psychic income" than with monetary returns.'³⁰ However, there was an important qualification in these findings: employees did not acquire 'psychic income' through group benefits and activities, but through personalised supervision and individual reward.³¹

Between 1939 and 1942 Sears consultants conducted employee attitude surveys with 37,000 Sears employees nationwide. Their findings replicated those of the NRDGA study: employees ranked pay eighth as a factor of their own company loyalties, and placed highest emphasis on employer fairness, security for the future, and 'interesting work'.³² By drawing attention to the importance of individual morale, job security and personal status as conditions of employee loyalty, these early studies provided the basis for the further growth of nascent retail human relations programmes.

The Second World War halted research into retail employee attitudes and morale—but only temporarily. Between 1945 and 1960 difficulty with employee recruitment and retention led retail employers in both Britain and America to conduct an abundance of attitudinal surveys of both potential and extant shopworkers at company, regional and national levels.³³ Post-war retailers had

²⁹ NRDGA, *Employee Attitude*, esp. 26-31.

³⁰ NRDGA, *Employee Attitude*, 30.

³¹ NRDGA, *Employee Attitude*, 28-30, 33-34, 36-37.

³² Jacoby, *Modern Manors*, 115-116.

³³ The key British surveys were Joan Woodward, *The Saleswoman: A Study of Attitudes and Behaviour in Retail Distribution* (London: Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1960); *Survey of Saleswomen Leaving London Stores* (Industrial Welfare Society, 1954); and Lillian G. Malt, *Stores & Shops Staff Attitude Survey* (Newman Books Ltd., 1957). Allan Flanders, Ruth Pomeranz and Joan Woodward, *Experiment in Industrial Democracy: A Study of the John Lewis Partnership* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968). The major American study, from research conducted in 1940, was George F. F. Lombard, *Behavior In A Selling Group: A Case Study of Interpersonal Relations*

discovered that such surveys offered two distinct advantages. First, questionnaires developed by consultant professionals according to the level of scientific rigour common to contemporary sociological and psychological research challenged employers' own assumptions about employee attitudes with more scientific—even if less than objective—methods and results.³⁴ Second, employee attitude surveys allowed retail managers a new avenue for voice that could help convince shopworkers that they were not merely cogs in the sales machine, but valuable individuals with opinions, feelings and concerns that mattered to retail management.³⁵

The employee attitude survey method was not infallible. Most post-war retail surveys in both Britain and America were based on small, less-than-representative samples of employees, and many of their questions were skewed toward soliciting either predominantly positive or mostly negative responses. However, despite their methodological faults, studies by retailers, management scholars and sociologists, with different interests and perspectives on retail employee relations, came to remarkably similar conclusions.

The most important, if least surprising, finding of retail employee attitude studies was that high employee morale correlated strongly with employee loyalty and productivity.³⁶ While the 1937 NRDGA study of employee attitudes had demonstrated that employee loyalty during the Depression had been almost entirely a product of job security, researchers in the mid-1940s argued that a tighter labour market and lower unemployment meant 'new employee independence', i.e. more freedom to roam the job market.³⁷ While their case for post-war job mobility may have been overstated, in the mid-1940s retail researchers came to three conclusions: employee turnover was high; high

in a Department Store (Boston: Harvard University, 1955). Other American attitudinal studies were recorded in retail trade journals. For example, Evelyn Dawn Fraser, 'Inside Information for Retailers: A Study of Employee Attitudes,' *JR* 30 (Spring 1954), 21-28, 44; and T. D. Ellsworth and Jeanne S. Hulquist, 'Why Do College Graduates Leave Retailing?' *JR* 31 (Winter 1955-56), 157-165.

³⁴ McFadyen was the Editor of Britain's retail trade journal, *Stores and Shops*, and this article was a clear attempt to overview British and American retail employee surveys in an attempt at improving employee attitudes in both countries. Edward McFadyen, 'Improving Attitudes and Performance of Salespeople: Reducing Staff Turnover—an Alternative to Introducing Self-Selection,' *JR* 36 (Summer 1960), 73-80.

³⁵ NRDGA Personnel Group, *Training and Holding Employees* (New York: NRDGA, 1951), 102.

³⁶ NRDGA, *Employee Attitude*, 10-11.

³⁷ NRDGA, *Employee Attitude*, 27. Natalie Kneeland, 'Applying Psychology in Postwar Training,' *JR* 20 (February 1944), 19-24.

employee turnover had a negative impact on sales productivity; and stores with high employee morale had lower labour turnover rates.³⁸ The other findings common to retail researchers in Britain and the US identified the four most significant factors underlying employee morale and employee loyalty: the emotional quality of working relationships among employees, supervisors and managers; prestige, status and self-respect; job security; and opportunities for advancement.

The Importance of Sociable Work Cultures

When asked to rate the factors most important to their own job satisfaction, department and variety store employees routinely placed friendly, comfortable relationships with management and other employees at the top of the list.³⁹ However, in her study of London saleswomen, Joan Woodward reported that despite low rates of unionisation, relations between staff and managers in British department stores were nevertheless marked by a discernable element of hostility.⁴⁰ On the subject of supervisory relations, one British shop assistant commented in the early 1930s that:

I, personally, would feel much more inclined to put in my best work if there was any indication anywhere that what I said or did mattered. The attitude of the manager is pretty much, 'You are not paid to think, you are paid to do as you are told', and however keen a fellow may be at the outset, he soon wilts and loses his enthusiasm when he finds he is being treated simply as a very small and unimportant part in a big machine. The whole atmosphere of the job inclines him to take up a routine attitude, and he is more careful not to annoy the Boss, than he ever is to satisfy the customer.⁴¹

In America, a New York University School of Retailing study, which compared department store, specialty and branch store employees, came to similar conclusions. This study found that among the three store types, department store employees rated their supervisors lowest, with an average rating of 69 per cent. Respondents were particularly critical of their supervisors' methods of

³⁸ For turnover rates and effect of turnover on sales productivity, see Chapter 1. On correlation between morale and turnover at Kresge's department store in Newark, NJ, where employee loyalty and sales productivity remained comparatively high during the war, Hugh E. Barnes, 'Employee Morale Pays Wartime Dividends,' *DSE* 5 (10 March 1942), 1, 18. See also, NRDGA, *Training and Holding Employees*, 97-98, 103.

³⁹ 'Staff Council 26th Annual General Meeting,' *HG* 31 (June 1946), 51-53.

⁴⁰ Woodward, *The Saleswoman*, 57-58.

⁴¹ Whitehead, 'National Survey,' 42-43.

communication (for example, criticising workers in public), for the lack of individual feedback on job performance, and for supervisors' lack of interest in employees' personal problems.⁴² These three concerns recurred with predictable repetition in other surveys and analyses of department and variety store employee attitudes.⁴³ (See Figure 3.5.)

The sum of these surveys signalled a problem with communications, including inefficient 'downward' communication of store policies and performance feedback, and a general lack of opportunity for 'upward' communication of employee suggestions, opinions and concerns. No matter how low the unionisation rates, British and American retail employers feared that where their systems of feedback and communication failed, union representation might succeed. From the end of the First World War in Britain, and from the late 1930s in America, department and variety store employers became keenly aware that employee access to grievance systems and other outlets for expression of voice might delay exit, help lower employee turnover rates and forestall unionisation. As John Spedan Lewis wrote in 1951, 'Your dentist is only important to you when your teeth are bad. Dentistry arose from tooth-trouble and Trade-Unionism arose from grievances.'⁴⁴

Relationships among employees were no less important. The 1937 NRDGA study of employee attitudes found that employee loyalties among new employees, the population most susceptible to turnover, were highly dependent on the initial reception they received from colleagues.⁴⁵ Surveys of the post-war period continually demonstrated that both selling and non-selling employees placed great value on the quality of the work cultures in which they spent their working lives. Shopworkers looked to their fellow employees for moral support under the mentally fatiguing demands of customer service, for guidance in the face of new responsibilities and policies, and for companionship in the slack periods when there were few customers around to be served. As two British saleswomen in Lillian Malt's study commented, 'Working with nice people

⁴² Fraser, 'Inside Information,' 25.

⁴³ Woodward, *The Saleswoman*, 57-58, 63-64; NRDGA, *Training and Holding Employees*, 100-102. S. I. Spector, 'Chain Store Human Relations,' *JR* 30 (Winter 1954), 161-167, 186.

Kneeland, 'Applying Psychology,' 19-24. NRDGA, *Training and Holding Employees*, 109.

NRMA, *Communications Downward and Upward* (New York: NRMA, 1967).

⁴⁴ 'Trade-Unionism and Profit-Sharing,' *GJLP* 33 (17 November 1951), 546.

⁴⁵ NRDGA, *Employee Attitude*, 36-39.

Figure 3.5. Cooking up discontent

How to make a
QUICK

LABOUR

TURNOVER

Ingredients

- 2 Raw Newcomers
- 3 Unseasoned Catering Assistants
- 1 Hardboiled Supervisor
- 2 Pints of Muddled Orders
- A Slice of Indifference
- 1 Tin of Grated Temper
- A full Measure of Rush

Training to taste

Method

Take the 2 Raw Newcomers, put one on serving tea, the other relieving the Cashier; add 3 Unseasoned Catering Assistants and Hardboiled Supervisor, make into a batter with Muddled Orders and the Measure of Rush. Mix well. When thoroughly fermented, pour cold water on any of the ingredients which show signs of helpfulness or good suggestions, Drain off Supervision, add Grated Temper and Slice of Indifference. Simmer all day and leave until next morning, when the human ingredients will have vanished or become inactive.

General Notes

This is a short supply recipe, when Staff Management, that most vital ingredient, is not available.

USE THIS RECIPE WITH EXTREME CARE

TEMP

By the post-war years, British and American retailers clearly understood the importance of good supervision technique to preventing labour turnover, as evidenced in this item from Marks & Spencer's.

Staff Management News and Training News Bulletin 7 (Jan. 1949), 4.

makes all the difference,' and 'I couldn't work if I couldn't get on with the people there.' One-third of the 1100 respondents in Malt's survey rated having 'pleasant working companions' of foremost importance, even before pay.⁴⁶ Indeed, many shopworkers had entered retail employment looking for a job with opportunities for sociability. What many found was quite the opposite.⁴⁷

The structure of department store work, particularly among salespeople, discouraged socialising among employees during working hours. Long-standing store rules specifically forbade the gathering of workers in selling areas during working hours, largely in response to customer complaints that salespeople spent too much time gossiping and not enough time serving. Consider the following from the rules book for James Howell department store staff in Cardiff: 'Staff are reminded that they must not lounge, form groups, walk arm in arm, or engage in conversation across the aisle or department, but always remember that they are on duty whilst in the store.'⁴⁸ In addition to store rules, the physical layout of selling departments and service desks isolated shopfloor workers from each other for long periods of time, and isolated employees of different departments almost entirely. The nature of the selling job required that salespeople spend most of the day talking to customers with whom they were more frequently strangers than acquaintances. Finally, the prevalence of commission as a means for boosting individual incentive undermined departmental work cultures by fostering competition, jealousy, and a higher awareness of disparity in status among salespeople.⁴⁹

All of this took its toll on the emotional atmosphere of store selling departments. The same NYU School of Retailing study that reported department store employees' low ratings of their supervisors also reported that department store workers gave their colleagues a score of only 17 per cent on 'courtesy to co-workers'.⁵⁰ This is not to say that shopworkers in some departments in some stores did not foster friendships with other employees, or that all selling departments were necessarily antagonistic. Customer complaints about employee

⁴⁶ Quoted in McFadyen, 'Improving Attitudes,' 77, 75.

⁴⁷ Woodward, *The Saleswoman*, 71-74.

⁴⁸ James Howell & Co., Staff Rules, 1960s, 15-16, HF14/4/9, UGA.

⁴⁹ Woodward, *The Saleswoman*, 71-74. McFadyen, 'Improving Attitudes,' 77. NRDGA, *Employee Attitude*, 55-56. But as George Lombard discovered, the atmosphere of sales floor cultures differed by department, Lombard, *Behavior in a Selling Group*.

gossip suggest the opposite, and the structure and practices of non-selling departments were more amenable to employee sociability during working hours. In his study, George Lombard found that younger saleswomen were more likely to cultivate friendships among colleagues and subvert store rules than older saleswomen. However, Lombard also noted that any fostering of collegial relationships on the sales floor resulted more from employee willingness to flout store rules than from any source of managerial encouragement.⁵¹ Retail researchers were quick to note the consequences of poor collegial morale. In her study, Woodward hit at the heart of the problem when she argued that 'the absence of any feeling of "solidarity" with colleagues may be an important factor contributing to the high labour turnover in retail distribution'.⁵²

Most shopworkers needed more than extracurricular store activities and a paternalist rhetoric of family to breed the interpersonal loyalties that would make for the friendly work cultures that inhibited employee turnover and improved customer satisfaction. In order to foster the co-operative work ethic so central to collective productivity, store managers needed to develop a new organising discourse of company culture around which departmental-level and company-level interpersonal and *functional loyalties* could be mobilised.

The Importance of Finding Meaning in Work

British and American employee attitude surveys demonstrated that a second important factor underpinning shopworkers' loyalty and morale was, broadly defined, finding 'meaning' in work. The 1937 NRDGA study was a harbinger of such news. It concluded that the insignificance granted individual white collar employees in modern society left such employees groping for some sense of meaning.⁵³ During the war American personnel managers predicted that people returning to retail from the battlefield and from defence industries would be looking for a continued sense of meaning and importance from their labour.⁵⁴ The ordered conformity and bland routine of post-war middle-class suburbia only

⁵⁰ Compare this to the somewhat higher 38/100 score recorded by branch store employees, or the 61/100 score by specialty store workers. Fraser, 'Inside Information,' 24.

⁵¹ Lombard, *Behaviour in a Selling Group*, 43-112, 147-167.

⁵² Woodward, *The Saleswoman*, 74.

⁵³ NRDGA, *Employee Attitude*, 30-31.

⁵⁴ Kneeland, 'Applying Psychology,' 19-20. Paul F. Gorby, 'Marshall Field Is Prepared for the Veteran's Homecoming,' *BNRDGA* 27 (June 1945), 18-22, 60.

heightened white collar workers' anxiety over individual meaning and social status.⁵⁵

Finding meaning in work did not mean the same thing for all shopworkers. For some it meant the availability of intellectual or interpersonal challenges, for others it meant feeling that they and their store were of use to the community, for still others it meant having the opportunity to exert control over their own or others' work patterns and goals.⁵⁶ The theme throughout was self-respect: how to acquire it, expand it and sustain it through work and working relationships. A precondition of self-respect was perceived status and prestige, both in the workplace among customers and other shopworkers, and outside the workplace in the broader community. As one executive from Woodward & Lothrop department store in Washington, D.C. argued, 'When you make a job seem important to the people doing the job, and in effect pay respect to them, you will encourage permanence, stability and a sound sense of values, which will endure over a long period of time.'⁵⁷ Study after study concurred, demonstrating that self-actualisation and workplace productivity were highly interdependent.⁵⁸

The problem for department and variety store managers was that employee attitude studies also demonstrated that both selling and non-selling jobs were failing to live up to shopworkers' expectations. Historically speaking, shopworkers could 'borrow prestige' from their customers, high-quality merchandise and reputable employers.⁵⁹ However, the prestige on loan came with high interest rates: mental and emotional fatigue, physical manifestations of emotional stress (like ulcers, high blood pressure and headaches), antagonistic work cultures, the occasional customer demanding not 'service' but servility, and constant reminders that 'borrowing' was not possessing.⁶⁰ In his 1951 survey of

⁵⁵ C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951; reprint 1956), 251-253.

⁵⁶ Lombard, *Behavior in a Selling Group*, 115.

⁵⁷ NRDGA, *Training for Profits* (New York: NRDGA, c. 1958), 16.

⁵⁸ Grady D. Bruce and Charles M. Bonjean, 'Self-Actualization Among Retail Sales Personnel,' *JR* 45 (Summer 1969). One American researcher argued that the correlation between emotional satisfaction and job tenure were particularly interconnected among married women who, he argued, sought out retail employment more for its emotional than financial satisfactions. NRMA, *Communications Downward and Upward*, 22.

⁵⁹ Mills, *White Collar*, 172-178. Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 210-215.

⁶⁰ On medical problems among retail workers at all levels, 'Advances in Personnel Management Based on Psychosomatic Principles,' *DSE* 10 (August 1947), 22, 49; 10 (September 1947), 52-54;

American white collar workers, C. Wright Mills argued that the proximity of department store salespeople to wealthier customers and expensive merchandise actually did more to exacerbate than assuage shopworkers' personal insecurities about social status. And, as Woodward argued in her study, the 'customer is always right' ethos that pervaded British and American retail culture meant that shopworkers were 'always making contacts with the customers from an inferior position'.⁶¹ As department stores began broadening their merchandise and service appeal at mid-century to capture the interest of the newly affluent lower-middle and working classes from whence most shopworkers originated, there was perhaps less customer prestige in circulation on which department store—let alone variety store—employees could capitalise. Indeed, shopworkers were no longer happy to borrow prestige from elite customers alone; instead, they sought first-hand social status and prestige of their own. An NRDGA study of 3000 employees who voluntarily quit their jobs found that 22 per cent quit because of threats to their status, and 34 per cent quit because of lack of job satisfaction.⁶²

Employee concerns about status were only exacerbated by employee complaints about the routinisation of non-selling work, the short-lived, anonymous nature of most customer/salesperson interactions, the lack of responsibility entrusted to shop floor workers, and the embarrassment caused on the sales floor by poor training and lack of knowledge about merchandise or store policy.⁶³ For retail managers who sought to recruit college-educated students for managerial and junior executive positions, the breaking point was a continual stream of surveys demonstrating that the large majority of qualified graduates avoided retail for two main reasons: the poor status and prestige they associated with the trade, and the lack of respect they had received from customers and management during their student days as seasonal or part-time shopworkers.⁶⁴

10 (October 1947), 96-99, 'In Every Walk of Life,' *Kenbar* 2 (January 1952), 18, HF51/5/5/20, UGA.

⁶¹ Woodward, *The Saleswoman*, 76-77, 53-55. Mills, *White Collar*, 174. McFadyen, 'Improving Attitudes,' 79.

⁶² NRDGA, *Training and Holding Employees*, 99.

⁶³ NRDGA, *Employee Attitude*, 34-36, 39-43. NRDGA, *Training and Holding Employees*, 103, 109. Woodward, *The Saleswoman*, 4. McFadyen, 'Improving Attitudes,' 75, 77-79.

⁶⁴ 'Pay's Not the Whole Story,' *Stores* 35 (July 1953), 44-45. Dwight Gentry, 'Attitude of College Students Toward Retailing as a Career,' *JR* 37 (Winter 1961-62), 44-48, 50. 'Students Speak Up—Against Retailing,' *Stores* 49 (October 1967), 32-33.

It was not that employers did not realise that shopworkers sought meaning and self-respect from their labour.⁶⁵ The problem was that employers and employees generally defined meaningful work differently. For many retail employers who had worked through the Great Depression, 'dignity of work' was a by-product of the work process, garnered from pride in a job well done. The key was not necessarily enjoyment of the work itself, but satisfaction with the rewards reaped by commitment, endurance and perfectionism.⁶⁶ For many employees, however, dignity was to be found in the process of labour itself and in the respect received from customers, colleagues and supervisors. In fact, many shopworkers were initially attracted to retail employment by its inherent ethic of service to customer and community, and by the higher status implied by working with people instead of raw materials.⁶⁷

Shop work certainly had the potential for satisfaction. Employee attitude surveys demonstrated that sales and service employees gleaned satisfaction from their work when they had the information and skill necessary to help customers fulfil their desires; when they were given additional responsibilities (on the condition that they had the skills necessary to fulfil those responsibilities); when their skills were explicitly and individually recognised by customers, colleagues and immediate supervisors; and when they believed their stores offered the community a unique and important service.⁶⁸ The challenge, it seemed, was threefold. Retail executives and managers had first to provide shopworkers with the skills and information on which their workplace self-respect depended. Secondly, they had to convince more career-minded students that retail labour was indeed skilled, useful and respectable work. Finally, store owners and managers had to convince shopworkers that department and variety stores played an important economic and social role in their communities and nations.

⁶⁵ In fact, there existed a large literature and much discussion at retail conferences revealing such awareness. For example, NRDGA, *Current Operating and Personnel Problems: Proceedings of the Store Management and Personnel Conference Held in Cleveland, May 27, 28, 29, 1946* (New York: NRDGA, 1946), 36-40.

⁶⁶ James Bliss (President of the NRMA), 'NRMA Viewpoint,' *Stores* 52 (April 1970), 25. 'Work and Reward,' *FG* 21 (1 February 1954), 2.

⁶⁷ Woodward, 4-6.

The Importance of Job Security

Status and prestige would mean little without job security—a third significant factor in employee morale and loyalty. It is not particularly surprising that after nearly a decade of the Great Depression, the 1937 NRDGA employee attitude survey respondents ranked job security one of their highest concerns.⁶⁹ However, even under the improved labour market conditions of the 1940s and '50s, shopworkers in both Britain and America continued to place great importance on job security as a precondition for company loyalty. Even in 1950, nearly one of four American retail employees left retail for other employment because of concerns about job security.⁷⁰

Perhaps the concerns about job insecurity voiced by survey respondents were in part a symptom of continued pessimism in both America and Britain about the sustainability of the welfare state, or a result of ongoing speculation about the inevitability of future economic recession. After all, in the 1930s and '40s, both the US and UK were involved in some of the greatest social experiments of their nations' histories. Furthermore, retail staff magazines and trade journals were hardly immune from the deep scepticism about state welfarism found in many political, business and media circles of the day. In 1956 regular JC Penney columnist Don Herold described the welfare state, in words he attributed to Thomas Jefferson, as 'a government wasting the labours of the people under the pretense of taking care of them'.⁷¹ (See Figure 3.6.) Despite regular predictions of economic decline by employers, it is more likely that shopworkers' continued job insecurity stemmed from seasonal hiring and firing, wide fluctuations in store employment levels according to economic upturns and downturns, and shop floor allegations of frequent unfair, spontaneous dismissals. (See Table 3.1.)

Inherently connected to employee concerns about job security were concerns about promotion and possibilities for advancement. In Lillian Malt's survey of 1000 saleswomen and 100 salesmen in London, respondents ranked

⁶⁸ Woodward, *The Saleswoman*, 4-6. NRDGA, *Employee Attitude*, 30-31.

⁶⁹ NRDGA, *Employee Attitude*, 26-28.

⁷⁰ NRDGA, *Training and Holding Employees*, 99. Bruce and Bonjean, 'Self-Actualization,' 82.

⁷¹ Don Herold, 'The Right to Scramble,' *PN* 22 (Sept. 1956), 2. See also, Don Herold, 'The Real American Way,' *PD* 14 (Nov-Dec. 1949), 2.

Figure 3.6. Fear for the future



You Have Freedom— Now KEEP It!

Old Ben Franklin said that.

He was sounding a warning. There had been eight years of war. He had seen the victory over the British troops. He knew the Colonists deserved to be free . . . that they had paid the high price in bloodshed with which freedom is bought. What alarmed him was that Americans might forget that freedom must be guarded constantly.

“You have freedom, now keep it,” he warned.

Today we’re facing the loss of freedom Franklin feared. That’s because we’ve forgotten that there’s nothing free about freedom. It can be stolen from us while we sleep. It can be lured away from us, bit by bit, if we are careless.

How can we keep our freedom?

By voting in all elections . . . by seeing to it that our representatives know what we want in government . . . by insisting that our government become economy-minded.

The Field Glass 20 (27 Oct. 1952), 4.

**Table 3.1. Number of Employees in American
Variety Stores by Month, 1954**

<u>Month</u>	<u>Full-time</u>	<u>Part-time</u>
January	231,502	98,558
February	225,938	93,417
March	227,850	96,332
April	233,155	109,538
May	225,297	103,802
June	220,644	94,273
July	220,097	88,947
August	220,994	88,885
September	228,794	99,302
October	230,488	102,094
November	241,952	109,417
December	295,811	171,452
Average	233,543	104,668

Source: Jules Backman, 'Characteristics of Retail Trade Employment,' *Journal of Retailing* 33 (Summer 1957), 83.

'reasonable chances of promotion' of highest importance to their working lives.⁷² Interestingly, from her smaller survey group, Joan Woodward found that London saleswomen 'do not appear to be very concerned with getting promotion'.⁷³ While this contradiction demonstrates the inherent faults in employee attitude surveys, the most simple explanation is that both were correct about the saleswomen they interviewed. In his study, George Lombard found that older saleswomen in particular were content to serve out their years in the same position, as long as that position remained secure. To that end, one 64-year-old woman said, 'I hope they will let me work here until I die. That is all I want—just to be able to keep on coming in here. You see, my whole life has been this.'⁷⁴

In contrast to their elders, younger shopworkers, women, and those with university degrees were much more concerned about possibilities for advancement. A 1955 study of college graduates in American retail found that women were more than twice as likely as men to enter retailing for 'opportunity' reasons.⁷⁵ Among the young, promotion was important, but satirical poems, short pieces of fiction, and employees' own letters in staff magazines revealed paradoxical sentiments about promotion, which included both deep insecurity *and* persistent optimism about the likelihood of job advancement. Consider, for example, this excerpt from 'A Junior's Lament' published in the *Harroldian Gazette* in 1947:

I know it will be ages and ages
Before I'm an Assistant you see,
So excuse this grouse, it's such a long wait
For a poor little Junior like me.⁷⁶

In contrast, a young male employee of the Kendal Milne Sports Department wrote the following in 1955:

Being a Junior in Kendal Milne
Is a job I shall cherish forever.
To make the position I intend to fulfil
'To work hard' will be my endeavour.
To be a success in the Junior stage
Will help me to chances up higher;
In years yet to come they might possibly think

⁷² Cited in McFadyen, 'Improving Attitudes,' 75.

⁷³ Quoted in McFadyen, 'Improving Attitudes,' 78.

⁷⁴ Lombard, *Behavior in a Selling Group*, 43-56.

⁷⁵ Ellsworth and Hulquist, 'Why Do College Graduates Leave,' 160.

⁷⁶ 'The Junior's Lament,' *HG* 32 (July 1947), 78.

And raise my position to Buyer.
And IF I'm made Manager of Kendal Milne
I hope that the Juniors'll see
Hard work from the start will but help them along.
And one day they might succeed me.⁷⁷

For many young entrants to the retail trade, as for this ambitious sporting goods salesman, it was the opportunity for promotion—however remote—that made low starting salaries in department and variety store work worthy of endurance.

The (Un)Importance of Wages?

Exactly how accurate were the late-1930s NRDGA and Sears' studies original findings that pay was not in itself the most important factor of employment for shopfloor employees? Post-war employee attitude studies in both Britain and America suggest that those early studies were not far off the mark, not only with regard to pay, but concerning hours as well. On the one hand, those surveys and letters from employees in staff magazines demonstrate that shopworkers never suffered any lack of opinion about their relatively poor wages and long, late hours. Nor did they pass up any opportunity to raise concerns about fair remuneration among staff. Indeed, the report of the Stores and Shops survey in the John Lewis Partnership *Gazette* was received with scepticism by partners dubious about the conclusion that pay did not matter most to respondents.⁷⁸ However, those most likely to single out poor salaries and long hours above everything else in surveys were high school and college graduates who had never entered the trade, and junior executives who were more flexible in their ability to transfer the managerial skills they acquired in retail to other, more lucrative trades.⁷⁹

British and American surveys of entry-level and non-managerial selling and non-selling workers found little correlation between wage and hour complaints and turnover alone. Rather, they noted that employees were most concerned about pay as a condition of comparative status (within the store and without), a consequence of promotion, or a symbol of managerial respect for work

⁷⁷ 'A Hopeful Junior,' *HG* 40 (June 1955), 294.

⁷⁸ 'Happiness in Gainful Occupation,' *GJLP* 40 (22 March 1958), 168-169; 40 (3 May 1958), 310-311.

well done. They also found that employees had, for the most part, resigned themselves to the extended working hours common to shop work.⁸⁰ These findings about wages and hours are particularly telling, because they run counter to historical and sociological evidence which suggests that British and American industrial labourers in the same period were willing to accept increased mechanisation and rationalisation in exchange for higher wages and other forms of financial security.⁸¹ By contrast, shopworkers were willing to grudgingly accept lower wages in exchange for the possibility of promotion, individual recognition, improved social status, and a sense of personal professionalism. While shopworkers were not any less likely than blue collar workers to value the status they incurred through personal consumption, family and community, it seems that their self-respect and social status also depended to a great degree on the source of their employment.

* * *

The sum of the results from employee morale and attitude surveys posed an on-going challenge to British and American department and variety store management at mid-century. The overall challenge was to maintain and expand paternalist social and material group benefits programmes, which shopworkers had come to take for granted as rights, while simultaneously fostering a new work culture that satisfied individuals' mental and emotional expectations of their work. If the surveys continually made one thing clear, it was that the sheer diversity of the retail labour force mitigated against any single, simple answer to problems with employee turnover and loyalty. Consequently, improvement in employees' *functional loyalties* would necessitate investment in a range of programmes: creating meaning in work, bettering human relations, professionalising selling and non-selling employment, and creating more fair and accessible systems of promotion. Unlike paternalist benefit programmes, which had been well-established in the first half of the twentieth century and were simply expanding in the post-war years, these new managerial styles were still in their initial stages of development in the years leading up to the Second World War. Importantly, these

⁷⁹ Gentry, 'Attitude of College Students,' 47-48, 56. Ellsworth and Hulquist, 'Why Do College Graduates Leave,' 159-165. 'Pay Comes First,' *Stores* 35 (April 1953), 47, 61-62. 'Pay's Not the Whole Story,' 44-45.

⁸⁰ Woodward, *The Saleswoman*, 49-51. McFadyen, 'Improving Attitudes,' 78-79.

new managerial techniques also frequently offered British and American retailers the opportunity to cultivate *ideological loyalties* among employees.

‘The Great Game Called Work’⁸²: The Rhetoric and Practice of Teamwork

One of the main findings of the employee attitude surveys conducted in British and American department and variety stores from the 1930s was that many shopworkers resented the competitiveness and even hostility of store work cultures. The paternalist rhetoric of family discussed in Chapter Two did little to address this. It focused primarily on cultivating strong vertical bonds between rank-and-file workers and store owners or managers, and horizontal bonds among shop floor workers outside of work. However, family rhetoric offered little to improve the bonds among employees *at work*. In contrast, the rhetoric of teamwork focused specifically on workplace relationships, infusing them with a sense of ‘usefulness’ and co-operation, imparting a sense of belonging and meaning at work.⁸³ The rhetoric of team and teamwork articulated the underlying ethic of other ‘new’ or ‘neo-paternalist’ managerial styles, which focused more directly on the emotional needs of the employee as producer rather than ‘family member’.

Although one Marshall Field’s columnist described the ‘team spirit’ of the community of employees in any company as ‘spontaneous,’ it was in fact carefully constructed.⁸⁴ The team spirit British and American retail managers aimed for required both a coherent discourse of team and teamwork through which employees could find meaning and incentive, and a practical system of workplace activities that would encourage employees to bond in a common effort with a concrete, discernible goal. In staff magazines, British and American store executives and editorialists constructed a discourse of team spirit around a network of key words that coalesced nicely around the free market ethic underlying basic business goals. Some of these key concepts were ‘competition’, ‘game’, ‘wins and defeats’, ‘captain’, ‘sporting spirit’, ‘play’, ‘players and spectators’, ‘champions’, ‘record breakers’, and ‘team player’. Bringing many of

⁸¹ John H. Goldthorpe, David Lockwood, Frank Bechhofer, Jennifer Platt, *The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 30-42.

⁸² ‘Teamwork in Business: Playing the Game,’ *Kenbar* 1 (March 1951), 6.

⁸³ J. Gordon Dakins, ‘The Art of Human Relations,’ *Stores* 35 (August 1953), 7, 9.

⁸⁴ ‘Fire on the Mountain,’ *FG* 21 (18 January 1954), 2.

these concepts together, one column in the British John Barker department store group's magazine described the store as a 'playground' where employees 'play the Great Game called Work' in competition for the loyalty of customers as 'spectators'. The column's author called on employees to 'play the game in a sporting spirit with a "will to win"', to devote themselves to their work in store with the passion of the athlete on the playing field.⁸⁵

One purpose served by the rhetoric of teamwork was to mobilise work cultures and relationships directly in service to higher productivity. The historical literature on team rhetoric and practice in the workplace has tended to attribute the shift from explicit managerial control to team-oriented managerial style to the adoption and elaboration of Japanese production methods in the American auto industry in the late twentieth century.⁸⁶ However, British sociologist Alan Fox noted a widespread shift toward use of team rhetoric in post-war British industry that coincided with the growing public and government emphasis on higher productivity following the Second World War.⁸⁷ The notable growth in the use of team analogies by both British and American department and variety store employers in the 1950s and '60s mirrored that trend in industry, perhaps in part because retailers were equally concerned with increasing productivity.⁸⁸ Arguably it was the all-round concern with improving productivity in both Britain and America immediately following the Second World War that instigated the long-term eclipse of family rhetoric by the team metaphor.

Unlike the rhetoric of family that executives and managers continually used to circuitously solicit better performance from their staff, the discourse of teamwork proved appealing to post-war business managers because it mobilised employee loyalties directly under the unashamedly explicit goal of raising

⁸⁵ These terms pervade many staff magazine articles, but the following are the richest: 'Teamwork in Business: Playing the Game,' 6. 'Down the Stretch,' *FG* 22 (16 August 1954), 2. 'The Scorecard,' *FG* 23 (19 March 1956), 2. Don Herold, 'Time for Extra Effort,' *PD* 20 (November-December 1954), 2. 'The Competitive Spirit as a Factor in Efficiency,' *GJLP* 32 (13 May 1950), 170-171. 'Management Voices Its Enthusiasm for the New Venture,' *SC* 34 (November 1952), 10.

⁸⁶ See, for example, Mike Parker, 'Industrial Relations Myth and Shop-Floor Reality: The "Team Concept" in the Auto Industry,' in Nelson Lichtenstein and Howell John Harris, *Industrial Democracy in America: The Ambiguous Promise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 249-274.

⁸⁷ Alan Fox, *Industrial Sociology and Industrial Relations*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1966), 3-4.

production. In retail the language of 'house' and 'family' focused on interpersonal loyalties in ways that glossed over the role and ambitions of the store as a business. In contrast, the rhetoric of team and teamwork allowed retail managers to bring the business of retailing back to centre stage and to mobilise interpersonal loyalties in the store not simply under the store as a community, but under the store as a business venture. In fact, the team analogy could not function properly without clearly articulated goals. In effect, the team metaphor was not one of interpersonal loyalty alone, but one of loyalty to others in service to a common goal toward which the team would work.

One of the major benefits of the team metaphor was that it outwardly elided the hierarchical power dynamics of the family model. Within the rhetorical framework of the team, the individual was no longer labouring solely for the attention and benefit of an ever-more-distant patriarchal figure as under the rhetoric of family. Instead, selling and non-selling workers were labouring together for the benefit of each other. This philosophy was exemplified by articles in the American JC Penney and Strawbridge and Clothier staff magazines which argued that selling and non-selling staff were responsible to each other in the store-wide team effort to secure customer loyalties. The individual who 'fumbled' his or her role in getting the goods from the receiving dock to the customer's door would not be held responsible to the owner of the company, but to all of the other individuals who relied on each other to make store procedures operate smoothly.⁸⁹ The underlying premise of team rhetoric was that in making individuals responsible to each other, meaning in work and in turn a drive to work could be found. As one British Co-operative official argued with regard to employee morale, 'Nothing spurs a man to greater effort than the knowledge that his team looks to him, depends upon him, for that effort. Nothing will throw a man into depths of apathy and despair more surely than the feeling of being "not

⁸⁸ For a comparative analysis of British and American retail productivity in this period, see Anthony Douglas Smith and D. M. W. N. Hitchens, *Productivity in the Distributive Trades: A Comparison of Britain, America and Germany* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

⁸⁹ 'Management Memo: The Selling Team,' *SC* 39 (April 1957), 4. Don Herold, 'You All Want Bigger Penney Selling,' *PD* 16 (August 1951), 2. William M. Batten, 'Our Penney Partners,' *PN* 27 (June 1962), 8-9. 'To You and You and You,' *PD* 13 (December 1948), 4-5. Mike Parker offers a thorough analysis of the psychological pressures of the team and collective responsibility, or 'management-by-stress' in American auto work: Parker, 'Industrial Relations Myth,' 261-270.

wanted”.⁹⁰ It was in being made responsible to others that shopworkers could find meaning through teamwork. (See Figures 3.7 and 3.8.)

The language of team spirit in retail stores struck a precarious balance between individualism and ardent communitarianism. In order for the rhetoric of teamwork to help foster *functional loyalties* among employees, each worker had to be convinced that his or her actions were crucially important and meaningful to the store as a team. To that end, one *Field Glass* columnist argued:

Upon your individual acts and attitudes rests not only your success but the success of our community, this Company. That is why each customer to be served, each package to be delivered, each crate to be unpacked, each phone call to be answered is all important. The way you do your job is the way of success or failure not only for you as an individual but for your Company.⁹¹

While the rhetoric of teamwork celebrated shopworkers' individual work activities, it also required that shopworkers keep their personal desire in check so that the good of the store as team always took precedence. As Hughston McBain, president of Marshall Field's, made clear to his staff in 1949, 'your success as an individual is closely bound up with that of the whole group. You or I as individuals cannot forge ahead at the expense of the group as a whole. The man who tries it will end by injuring the business, the group of which he is a part—and himself.'⁹² Paradoxically, being a good team member meant contributing one's all to improving store productivity on the one hand, and simultaneously restraining the self-serving ambitions that might have translated into higher productivity on the other.

One way of negating the under-inspirational dynamics of a system wherein employees were to sacrifice themselves individually, but to share the benefits collectively, was to implement team practices that returned an individual benefit to employees for participating in team effort. On a day-to-day basis, such practices included inter-departmental competitions to sell more goods, to provide better service, or to contribute the most to charity fund-raisers. Such competitions encouraged departments to operate as a team, working together to out-perform other departments in a store, or other stores in a chain, thus eliminating

⁹⁰ H. Long, 'Efficiency Without Fear,' *CR* 26 (February 1952), 42-44.

⁹¹ 'Fire on the Mountain,' 2. See also, 'Holiday Greetings from the Chairman,' *FG* 21 (21 December 1953), 4.

⁹² 'Excerpts from Address by President McBain,' *FG* 16 (17 January 1949), 1-2.

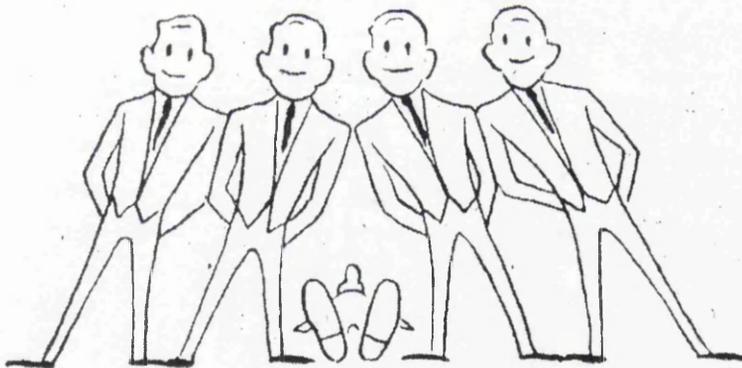
Figure 3.7. The Politics of Teamwork in America

Penney's shows what
team work - under the American
system of individual pro-
ductiveness - can do to render
a great, much-needed
public service



Pay Day 14 (April 1950), 8.

Figure 3.8. A function of team spirit



A contented team will close the gap.

As this image suggests, many staff managers hoped that teamwork and team spirit could help to finesse some of the less palatable aspects of retail work, including high labour turnover, seasonal redundancy, and bureaucratic managerial structures. It is notable that these are all men, as men were the recruits store managers most hoped to retain.

Drapers' Record (29 March 1952).

competition within a department. The individuals who sold the most or raised the most money for charities were often recognised with prizes and celebrations. In this way, intra-departmental competition was minimised, but individual effort was still given recognition.⁹³

Another, more systematic method of institutionalising the ethic of teamwork was to implement profit-sharing programmes which promised individual material reward for collective group effort.⁹⁴ The earliest such programmes in retail were the Sears, Roebuck programme, started in 1916 in America, and the John Lewis Partnership programme, started in 1929 in Britain. Although the Partnership plan was mandatory, almost all of the American department store profit-sharing programmes were voluntary. With deferred retrieval of dividend, these plans focused primarily on helping employees to build up profit-based pensions over a long period of employment, thus explicitly encouraging *fundamental loyalties*. Sanford Jacoby has argued that this strategy often worked at Sears, where many employees expressed reluctance to leave the company because their profit-sharing benefits, and in turn their pensions, increased with length of tenure.⁹⁵ However, a major downfall of the American programmes was that as of 1969, part-time workers and women workers who tended to cycle in and out of employment with a single store more often than men—those whose *fundamental* and *functional loyalties* were most difficult to solicit and maintain—were often excluded from profit-sharing programmes on the basis of eligibility requirements.⁹⁶ (See Table 3.2.)

In British retail, the only major profit-sharing programme of the early post-war years was that at the John Lewis Partnership.⁹⁷ Unlike the American programmes where profit-sharing was most often a voluntary, supplementary

⁹³ 'Contest Inspires Teamwork and Top Sales,' *PD* 16 (Sept. 1951), 3. 'Prize Contest to Determine Champion Selling Section,' *FG* 17 (29 Aug. 1949), 8.

⁹⁴ On the contours of profit-sharing in an earlier period, see Stuart D. Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism, 1880-1940*. (London: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 83-91; in a later period, see Lesley Baddon, Laurie Hunter, Jeff Hyman, John Leopold and Harvie Ramsay, *People's Capitalism? A Critical Analysis of Profit-Sharing and Employee Share Ownership* (London: Routledge, 1989).

⁹⁵ Jacoby, *Modern Manors*, 108-110. For more on the Sears profit-sharing plan, see Emmet and Jeuck, *Catalogues and Counters*, 679-714. 'Profit-Sharing at Sears-Roebuck,' *Stores* (May 1950), 65, 82-84.

⁹⁶ Jacoby, *Modern Manors*, 109.

⁹⁷ Many Co-operative employees shared in their societies' profits through dividend on purchases, but the benefit was received on the basis of their consumer membership, rather than because they were employees of the Co-operative retail societies.

Table 3.2. American Department Store Profit-Sharing Programmes to 1969

<u>Company</u>	<u>Programme Started</u>	<u>Eligibility in 1969</u>
Sears, Roebuck, Co.	1916	All regular full-time employees with one year of continuous service
J.C. Penney, Co.	1939*	All regular full-time employees with two and one-half years continuous service
Bullock's, Inc.	1943	All regular employees, aged 30-65, with more than five years continuous service
R.H. Macy & Co.	1944	All employees, aged 30-53, with three years continuous service and annual compensation over \$7,800
Broadway-Hale Stores	1953	All regular employees working 20 plus hours per week, aged 24-60, with more than two years service
Federated Department Stores	1953	All regular employees under age 64, have worked more than 1,150 hours per year, with two and one-half years service
Mercantile Stores Co.	1954	All regular full-time employees over age 25 with 24 months continuous service
Gimbel Brothers	1958	All regular full-time salaried employees with compensation over \$4,200 and two years service

*Revised to include non-managerial staff in 1966.

Source: Bert L. Metzger, Jerome A. Colletti, *Does Profit Sharing Pay? A Comparative Study of the Financial Performance of Retailers With and Without Profit Sharing Programmes* (Evanston, IL: Profit Sharing Research Foundation, 1971), 29-64.

benefit paid out of profits before distribution to regular shareholders, profit-sharing at the Partnership was part and parcel of John Spedan Lewis's unique 'middle-way' model. From 1929, all regular 'Partners', excluding seasonal employees, were automatically vested with shares in the Partnership. Each year, Partners received part of their dividend on those shares collectively through 'Partnership Benefit' which provided for the Partnership's leisure facilities and other collective amenities. Individually they also received a 'general bonus' on shares only in the form of new shares until 1964. At that time, the Partnership began returning five per cent of dividend on individual shares directly to Partners in cash, and the remainder in 'bonus' shares.⁹⁸ Although the Partnership's model was much more far-reaching than any of the American department store models of profit-sharing, two major goals were the same: to convince employees that they were 'working for themselves' as a team, and to encourage long-term *fundamental* and *functional loyalties* through financial reward for improved productivity.⁹⁹

* * *

One of the major effects of team rhetoric and practice was to suggest that store employees were working with and for each other rather than for the profit of a privileged few. However, the shift toward team rhetoric did not do away with the hierarchical relations of the family model, but simply shrouded that hierarchy in more modern, pseudo-democratic language. The team, like the family, still needed a leader, and it was that leader who decided the rules and goals of the team. As the retail institution that most dramatically implemented team concepts and practices, analysis of the experiences of the John Lewis Partnership exposes two of the underlying conflicts in the team model with regard to employee loyalties.

To begin with, all were not equal in the team model, or in the Partnership's profit-sharing programme. The number of shares a Partner initially received, and in turn the dividend received on those shares, was determined in proportion to 'ordinary pay as the best available measure of their individual contributions to the work of the team'.¹⁰⁰ The underlying assumption was that if an individual earned

⁹⁸ Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, 28-43, 82-84, 203-213, 218-221. John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All* (London: Kerr-Cross Publishing, 1948), 43-44. Flanders et al., *Experiment in Industrial Democracy*, 102-06.

⁹⁹ Quote from Jacoby, *Modern Manors*, 109.

¹⁰⁰ Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, 14.

more in salary, he or she contributed more directly to the Partnership's profits and therefore deserved a greater share of the profit. The eligibility requirements for profit-sharing in American department stores also targeted and rewarded the middle-age, full-time, long-term employees without the same benefits available to younger or less permanent 'team members'.¹⁰¹ This inequality of reward and access to reward did not fit easily with the principle that all should sacrifice for the greater good of the team.

Secondly, sharing the responsibilities and rewards of teamwork rarely meant having the opportunity to share power in decision-making processes. In the John Lewis Partnership, shareholders including Partners were not allowed to vote on their stock as long as the Partnership met its guaranteed return rates. This meant that the major business decisions that affected sales productivity were not made by Partners but by the Chief Executive and appointed Trustees.¹⁰² Furthermore, it was virtually impossible for Partners to sell their ordinary, non-bonus shares.¹⁰³ Without freedom to vote on or sell most of their shares, Partners were not easily convinced to imagine themselves shareholders in a co-operative business or to invest themselves in a collective team effort. The persistent demand for cash in lieu of stock in the 1950s was only one symptom of this underlying problem.¹⁰⁴

In the post-war years, Partnership employees frequently questioned their status as 'Partners' and deliberately described themselves as 'employees', 'staff' or the 'rank-and-file', much to the chagrin of Lewis and consequent Chairmen.¹⁰⁵ The ethic of teamwork or partnership was clearly not one to which all, or even the majority of Partners subscribed. Similarly in 1969, the management of Bullock's department stores in America concluded that profit-sharing was only of 'doubtful effect' in 'improving morale, teamwork, and cooperation among employees', and

¹⁰¹ Bert L. Metzger and Jerome A. Colletti, *Does Profit Sharing Pay? A Comparative Study of the Financial Performance of Retailers With and Without Profit Sharing Programs* (Evanston, IL: Profit Sharing Research Foundation, 1971), 29-64.

¹⁰² Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, 99-129, 153-162. Flanders et al., *Experiments in Industrial Democracy*, 63-65. 'Shares or Cash?' *GJLP* 34 (30 Aug. 1952), 399.

¹⁰³ Lewis, *Partnership for All*, 44-45. 'The Stock-Dealing Pool,' *GJLP* 37 (5 Nov. 1955). 'Licences to Sell Partnership Shares,' *GJLP* 39 (16 Nov. 1957), 924. Lewis rescinded limitations on sales of bonus stock in 1954, 'No Savings,' *GJLP* 36 (21 Aug. 1954), 596-598.

¹⁰⁴ 'Why Not in Cash?' *GJLP* 36 (28 Aug. 1954), 620. 'The Outlook and Related Matters,' *GJLP* 32 (12 Aug. 1950), 327. 'Rumour,' *GJLP* 35 (4 April 1953), 135.

¹⁰⁵ 'Partnership,' *GJLP* 32 (22 April 1950), 138-39. 'For Whom do Partners Work?' *GJLP* 35 (16 May 1953), 226; 35 (30 May 1953), 255. 'Letters to the Editor,' *GJLP* 31 (28 May 1949), 208.

only 'moderately effective' for 'attracting and holding good employees'.¹⁰⁶ As the employee attitude surveys routinely demonstrated, it was not just a more collegial work atmosphere that shopworkers sought, but more control over and meaning from their own work. The expansion of human relations programmes in British and American department and variety stores at mid-century would more directly address those issues.

Overall, the rhetoric of teamwork and the practice of profit-sharing were not overwhelmingly helpful for securing explicitly expressed *functional loyalties* from shopworkers reluctant to actively engage with the discourse of teamwork. Nevertheless, such programmes did prove successful for securing *functional loyalties* from employees in the less explicit ways that mattered most. A study of profit-sharing plans in American department stores from 1952 to 1969 demonstrated that those stores with profit-sharing programmes consistently measured higher on all indices of productivity and profitability than stores without such programmes. For example, in 1969, company earnings per employee for profit-sharing companies in the study were \$1,165, or nearly twice that of \$647 per employee for non-profit-sharing companies. In the same year, earnings per common share were 87.6 per cent higher in profit-sharing than non-profit-sharing stores.¹⁰⁷ In the John Lewis Partnership, higher productivity paid off by the mid-1960s, when Partners' weekly earnings were on average five to ten per cent above earnings in other large stores *before* receipt of bonus stock.¹⁰⁸ With higher productivity, profits and pay, it was not the primary goal of improving retail competitiveness that was left unfulfilled by the rhetoric and practice of teamwork. Rather, it was the secondary goals of helping employees to find meaning and companionship in work that demanded further attention.

Human Relations and the Psychology of Voice

We need to start recognizing an employe [sic] as the "customer" of a job.
--*Department Store Economist*, 1948¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Metzger and Colletti, *Does Profit Sharing Pay*, 34.

¹⁰⁷ Metzger and Colletti, *Does Profit Sharing Pay*, 14, 16.

¹⁰⁸ Flanders et al., *Experiment in Industrial Democracy*, 98-99.

¹⁰⁹ 'Future Improvements in Management Will Be in the Area of Employee Relations,' *DSE* 11 (May 1948), 24-25, 28.

The larger and more diffuse that chain variety store and department store companies became through consolidation and expansion in the mid-twentieth century, the more removed rank-and-file workers were from company directors and decision-making processes. Employee concerns about lack of communication with management as expressed in employee attitude surveys arguably resulted in part from the problems inherent in company expansion. One solution common to industry, as Harriet Bradley argued in her depiction of 'neo-paternalism', was for large employers to create new managerial techniques and institutional structures that would compensate for loss of employee voice.¹¹⁰ As discussed in Chapter One, the opportunity for expression of individual voice was a crucial precondition of loyalty in general and of *functional loyalties* in particular. Consequently, the new methods of communication implemented by British and American retailers to facilitate communication and expression of voice included staff magazines, staff councils and formalised grievance procedures, and the re-invigoration of employee-supervisor relations through supervisory training.

Staff magazines

Department and variety stores' earliest foray into improving communication with employees was the staff magazine. Many retail employers—like their industrial counterparts—had initiated staff magazine publications to compensate for the growing gap between shopfloor employees and upper-level executives as their companies continued to grow through expansion and acquisition.¹¹¹ Consequently, many large department stores and chain-store multiples started employee publications in the first decades of the twentieth century: Strawbridge & Clothier in 1907, Harrods in 1913, John Lewis Partnership in 1918, Marshall Field's in 1933, JC Penney in 1936, just to name a few.¹¹² By the early post-war years, many of these well-established magazines had readerships to rival small-town papers: over 50,000 nation-wide for JC Penney's *Pay Day*, 10,000 for Marshall Field's *Field Glass*, 4,000 for Strawbridge & Clothier's *Store Chat*,

¹¹⁰ Harriet Bradley, 'Change and Continuity in History and Sociology: The Case of Industrial Paternalism,' in Stephen Kendrick, Pat Straw, and David McCrone (Eds.), *Interpreting the Past, Understanding the Present* (London: MacMillan, 1990), 186-187.

¹¹¹ Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism*, 62-65. Andrea Tone, *The Business of Benevolence: Industrial Paternalism in Progressive America* (London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 99-139.

¹¹² For a list of major American department store staff magazines as of 1946, see 'Store Publications,' *DSE* 9 (July 1946), 151.

8500 for Harrods' *Harroddian Gazette*, and nearly 5,000 weekly for the John Lewis Partnership's *Gazette*.¹¹³ In the post-war years, many stores which had not previously published staff magazines began doing so during periods of store or buying-group expansion: the John Barkers group began their magazine, *The Kenbar* in 1950, and the House of Fraser started their publication, *In Company*, during acquisition of the Harrods group in 1959.

As discussed in Chapter Two, retail house organs helped to sustain family rhetoric even in a context of company expansion by reporting the friendships and associations made through the store, and by recounting the activities of the store community, both past and present. This fitted well with the underlying ethic of 'new' managerial styles, which aimed to convince employees that they were not working for a cold, sterile industrial machine, but for a vibrant community or 'team' of individuals. However, the staff magazine was more than just a symptom of the managerial drive to create a coherent company culture. In response to concerns about breakdowns in communication as expressed in employee attitude surveys, staff magazines also became a means for top-down communication between store executives and employees, or vehicles for owners and managers to directly inform employees of policies on selling and other work procedures. Indeed, one of the stated objectives of the retail house organ as documented in trade journals was 'to "sell" the store's philosophies and regulations to its employees'.¹¹⁴ Consequently, addresses by company executives and selling advice columns became standard fare for retail staff magazines.¹¹⁵

Beyond company policy, staff magazines were an important means for department and variety store executives to communicate to all workers the qualities they most valued in employees. This was particularly true of columns announcing the promotion of certain employees at the store, or even national level. Such columns fulfilled two goals simultaneously. The publication of an individual's photo and the story of his or her promotion offered that employee much-desired affirmative job feedback that was both personal and public. It

¹¹³ 'As Often As Need Be', *FG* 25 (2 June 1958), 2. Inside cover, *HG* 42 (October 1957), 450. 'Gazette Circulation,' *GJLP* 38 (7 April 1956), 218.

¹¹⁴ 'Your House Magazine,' *DSE* 20 (May 1957), 38-39, 42. 'Store Publications,' 151. 'House Organs Are Vital Organs,' *DSE* 12 (September 1949), 112.

¹¹⁵ For example, Austin T. Graves, 'Traditional Service Our Biggest Asset,' *FG* 16 (29 Nov. 1948), 3. Garret L. Bergen, 'The Other Guy,' *FG* 16 (28 Feb. 1949), 3. Jean L. Schureman,

simultaneously informed other employees of the values and attitudes most privileged by employers and managers.¹¹⁶

The 'selling' or communication of executive philosophy through staff magazines went well beyond store walls. During the Cold War, many American department and variety store staff magazines published editorials, transcripts of speeches, and special articles lauding the benefits of free enterprise against the communist or socialist alternative. Such articles constantly connected free market economics to democratic imperatives, educating shopworkers in the underlying principles of American retail business activism. For example, in 1956 one Penney's columnist described the basic elements of American free enterprise as '(1) private ownership of property; (2) the profit motive; (3) the competitive market,' and added that 'the indispensable life-giving factor in each of these is: freedom.'¹¹⁷ The characterization of communists and socialists as usurpers of personal liberties and incentives in similar columns dovetailed with retailers' representations of the New Deal state as a socialist liability on America's economic and democratic prosperity.¹¹⁸

In American retail house organs, editors offered not only lessons in the philosophy of free enterprise, but articulate arguments about contemporary political issues. Scripts of speeches and writings by political and economic experts addressed the problems of expanding state influence in the domestic economy, criticising taxes and representing federal welfare programmes as detrimental to America's ethic of 'rugged individualism', competition, hard work

'Keystones of Distinction,' *FG* 16 (28 March 1949), 3. "'Never Out" Means Business,' *FG* 22 (23 May 1955), 1; 23 (29 Aug. 1955), 1. 'Sayings of the Founder' column, each issue of *PN* and *PD*.

¹¹⁶ For example, 'Some Recent Promotions,' *HG* 40 (June 1955), 278; 'Our Portrait Gallery of New Promotions,' *SC* 33 (Nov. 1951), 8-9.

¹¹⁷ Don Herold, 'The Land of the Free,' *PD* 21 (June 1956), 2. See also 'First Quarter's Results Given by Chairman at Annual Meeting,' *FG* 18 (7 May 1951), 1, 3.

¹¹⁸ There were a multitude of such articles in American retail employee magazines, but the following provide a sample: 'Show Me Any Other Country,' *FG* 16 (30 Aug. 1948), 4-5. 'Communism and Socialism—Look at People They Produce!' *PD* 15 (October 1950), 2. 'Communist Stores in Radical Contrast to Free World's,' *PN* 22 (Feb. 1957), 8. On the importance of free enterprise to American democracy, see 'First Quarter Results Announced by Chairman at the Annual Meeting,' *FG* 19 (5 May 1952), 1, 3. 'Profit—Russian Style,' *SC*, 54 (February 1963), 3-4. 'Profits—As The American Sees It Today,' *SC* 54 (March-April 1963), 5-6. On the importance of free enterprise to the American consumer way of life, see for example, 'The American Way is the Penney Way,' *PD* 15 (Jan. 1951), 7. See also, 'Who's A Capitalist?' *PD* 15 (July 1950), 2. 'Profits Are American,' *PD* 16 (Feb. 1952), 2. 'Ants in Our Pants,' *PD* 19 (November-December 1953), 2. 'If Men Were Free to Try,' *FG* 21 (24 May 1954), 2. 'About Profits,' *FG* 24 (25 March 1957), 2. 'Sees Opportunities Unlimited for Americans,' *PD* 15 (June 1950), 1.

and personal incentive.¹¹⁹ In such columns, retail employers attempted to appeal to their readers not only as employees, but also as citizens. They educated their employees in business's post-war political agenda, and then encouraged readers to contact their Congressional representatives on matters of government expansion and the supposed looming erosion of the American work ethic. For example, in 1953 *Field Glass* columnists started an IGHAT, 'I Gotta Hollar About Taxes', campaign offering employees information on how to contact their representatives to lobby for lower taxes.¹²⁰

Importantly, American retail house organs served not only to communicate managerial philosophy and political ideology, but to distinctly define the place of shopworkers within that ideology. This helped to clarify the importance of employees' *functional* and *ideological loyalties*, but also to make shop work seem more meaningful and of more importance to community and nation. The explicit nationalisation of shop work in staff magazines began during the Second World War, when department and variety store employers continually reminded their employees that they were crucial to the war effort in their roles as savings bond salespeople.¹²¹ (See Figure 3.9.) With the intensification of the Cold War in the late 1940s and 1950s and the prioritisation of consumption in a Keynesian economy, the nationalisation of retail work continued into the post-war years.

While post-war American retailers in general seemed content to credit free market economics for the privileges of American life, they were careful to place the onus for economic stability on customers, and on shopworkers as servants to the citizen as customer.¹²² Through columns in staff magazines and campaigns like Chicago's 'Salute to Selling Week' in 1953, retailers absolved business management of responsibility for capitalist shortcomings, projecting onto the

¹¹⁹ For example, 'The Vital Margin,' *FG* 19 (5 Nov. 1951), 4. 'It's Your Federal Government!' column, starting *FG* 17 (31 Oct. 1949), 8. The *Field Glass* office offered employees copies of *The Best Kept Secret in the Country*, a booklet documenting the "wasteful government spending" that was "a fifth column working from within to sap our country's strength." 'The Best Kept Secret in the Country,' *FG* 19 (25 Feb. 1952), 1. 'The America We Lost,' *FG* 20 (6 Oct. 1952), 8. 'Vs. Apron Strings,' *PD* 17 (Feb.-March 1953), 2. 'A Feeling of Uneasiness,' *PN* 25 (March 1960), 2.

¹²⁰ 'In Focus,' *FG* 20 (9 March 1953), 2; 'In Focus,' *FG* 20 (16 March 1953), 2. 'The King's Cart,' *FG* 22 (21 June 1954), 2. 'The Straw and the Camel's Back,' *PN* 26 (Aug. 1960), 2.

¹²¹ '29% of Quota is Subscribed During First Week of Drive,' *FG* 12 (12 June 1944), 1. 'A Tribute to Bond-Sellers In Congressional Record,' *FG* 13 (3 Dec. 1945), 1. War Stamp Special Issue, *PD* 7 (July 1942).

¹²² Italics in original. 'How to Prevent a Depression,' *FG* 19 (26 May 1952), 4.

Figure 3.9. The 'third army'

**THESE ARE THE GIRLS WHO SELL THE BONDS
THAT BUY THE THINGS THAT WIN THE WAR**



Staff magazines provided one means for conveying to retail staff a sense of their place in and importance to the national economy during and following the Second World War.

Field Glass (21 May 1945), 4.

salesperson responsibility for helping customers spend the country into prosperity. As a *Field Glass* columnist argued, 'All told, the story of selling is the story of America. Selling is what makes the wheels go round in the modern world. It is through competitive selling that the customer gains preeminence, freedom of choice, and the opportunity to enjoy the wealth of all nations.'¹²³ Alternatively, on the production side, JC Penney salespeople were told by their employers that 'You sales people can keep factories humming—or, if you sit down on the job, close 'em.'¹²⁴ Through staff magazines, both production *and* consumption came to depend at least rhetorically on the importance and efficiency of retail work, with 'the man or woman who fails to sell' painted as 'something close to an economic traitor'.¹²⁵

At times, the editors of British retail staff magazines also engaged in attempts to infuse shop work with national importance by clearly defining its position in the broader political economy. During a visit to Britain in 1956, Madame Fursteva, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, and her entourage visited Marks & Spencer's Baker Street and Pantheon stores. The Marks & Spencer's staff magazine editor capitalised on the opportunity to reinforce employees' *functional* and *ideological loyalties* by articulating the importance of the shopworker to Cold War cultural diplomacy:

The Russians wanted to see British retailing, and British merchandise at its best. Their British hosts didn't take them to Mssrs. X or Y but to the Pantheon and to Baker Street.

In terms of service, the implications of this can hardly be overestimated. It is simply that if this company is to represent Britain, and to thousands it already does in certain respects, the service it gives—both in its merchandise and in courtesy—must be beyond reproach.

In a world in which it may soon be possible to breakfast in Oxford Street, and dine in the Red Square the same day, international relationships assume a new significance.

Truly can it be said that today's salesgirls are in the *service* of their country.¹²⁶

¹²³ 'Salute to Selling Week,' *FG* 20 (20 April 1953), 1. 'Week Honoring Area Salesmen Gets under Way,' *Chicago Tribune* (19 April 1953), 7.

¹²⁴ 'Sales Make America Tick,' *PD* 20 (Sept. 1954), 2. 'Selling Makes America Tick. Saving Makes Its Dreams Come True,' *PD* 16 (Oct. 1951), 2. See also, J. C. Penney Co., *Opportunity for America, Penney's and You*, 1954, 'Associate Training Material 1920s-1960s' Box, JCPA.

¹²⁵ This was a broader theme in the American retail trade journals as well. 'Goods Will Not Sell Themselves--We Need Salesmanship!' *BNRDGA* 27 (Sept. 1945), 11, 13. 'Distribution--A Key to High Employment,' *DSE* 8 (Nov. 1945), 186. 'An Open Letter to Retail Salespeople,' *DSE* 9 (Dec. 1946), 130.

¹²⁶ 'A World to Serve,' *SMN* 2 (Sept. 1956), 2.

The prospect that Marks & Spencer's salespeople could be 'ambassadors to the world' while helping British shoppers stretch their pounds wisely in a time of austerity was a common one in *St. Michael News*.¹²⁷

In 1949 the *Harroldian Gazette*'s editor called on employees to help Britain 'increase our earnings from dollar countries' by sending exports home with tourists from around the world. In August and September of 1949 alone, Harrods delivered parcels to customers from 62 foreign countries. Under the motto, 'Harrods Serve the World', the editor explained the nature of the shopworker's role in this 'export trade':

The Harrods of to-day is the mecca for visitors from all parts of the world. They come to admire and appreciate the beauty of our Departments and the diversity and quality of our merchandise. Let us resolve that they are equally enthusiastic about ourselves and our service. By making that extra effort to give them a friendly welcome we can give a good impression of ourselves, our Store and the country as a whole.¹²⁸

Again, *ideological loyalties* were the basis on which *functional loyalties* could be infused with broader meaning and importance.

In general, however, the political and ideological propaganda in British retail house organs was notably more muted. Most political articles were limited to position papers on subjects directly affecting retail, such as the persistence of government controls on the sale of retail goods, or the pros and cons of regulatory wage and hour legislation.¹²⁹ Some editorials also emphasised the way shopworkers could contribute to national recovery following WWII by resolving 'to do a full day's work for a full day's pay'.¹³⁰ The John Lewis Partnership's *Gazette* proved an exception to this general trend. John Spedan Lewis, the company's founder and director through the mid-1950s, frequently filled the pages of each weekly *Gazette* during his tenure with articles on everything from trade unionism to totalitarianism.

¹²⁷ 'The Budget and You,' *SMN* 1 (29 April 1955), 2. 'The Budget,' *SMN* 2 (30 April 1956), 2. 'Ambassadors to the World,' *SMN* 2 (30 April 1956), 2. On Marks & Spencer's contribution to WWII, see Simon Marks, 'Our Contribution,' *Marks and Spencer Staff Bulletin* (February 1940), 1, K2/1A, M&SA.

¹²⁸ 'Devaluation and Us,' *HG* 34 (Nov. 1949), ii. See also, Sir William Mabane, 'Selling Britain to the World,' *In Company* 3 (Winter 1961), HF1/8/1/1/5, UGA.

¹²⁹ 'Should Controls Be Lifted on Retail Goods,' *Kenbar* 1 (Oct. 1950), 17, HF51/5/5/6, UGA. 'Shop Trading Hours,' *GJLP* 38 (11 Aug. 1956), 611-612.

¹³⁰ '1945-1946,' *HG* 31 (March 1946), 2.

The importance of the Partnership's *Gazette* as an employee magazine went beyond its role as a propaganda tool during the Cold War. It was an integral part of Lewis's 'middle-way' model. Lewis claimed that profit-sharing and power-sharing would enable the Partnership to circumvent the vagaries of capitalism and the vices of Communism by facilitating the growth of the 'classless society' he envisaged.¹³¹ Knowledge-sharing was the necessary corollary, insofar as Partners of producer co-operatives needed to be convinced that they *were* in fact sharing the profits and power democratically. In Lewis's vision, knowledge-sharing would undermine class warfare—such as that from which Communism arose—whenever such conflict had stemmed from opinions that wealth had been distributed unjustly.¹³² To this end, the *Gazette* included merchandise buyers' results by name and department, and overall sales figures for branches and departments were reported frequently so that each individual partner could keep a finger on the pulse of the business.¹³³

The sharing of knowledge through the *Gazette* was also intended to allow more transparency between the producers as shareholders and the company directors as managers—in short to improve communication. The cover-page of each *Gazette* at mid-century went straight to this point. It read, 'The Journalism is intended to maintain closer touch between the different sections and individual members of the Partnership's total team, especially between the Management and all the rest, than can exist without some such means.'¹³⁴ The *Gazette* cover-page also read, 'The Partnership's Journalism is intended to play in all of the affairs of the Partnership the part that a Free Press plays in all of the affairs of a Nation.'¹³⁵ These two goals—improving communication between managers and employees and fulfilling the democratic obligations of free speech—were uniquely fulfilled through the *Gazette*. For all of the managerial concern about improving workplace communication, the *Gazette* was the only major retail house organ in either Britain or America to publish anonymous letters from employees and major

¹³¹ See above for discussion of profit-sharing and below for power-sharing.

¹³² Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, 44-54.

¹³³ Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, 46-47, 52-53. Buyers' and departmental results were, and still are, published in the last few pages of each *Gazette*.

¹³⁴ Cover page, *GJLP*, 39 (30 March 1957), 185.

¹³⁵ Cover-page, *GJLP*, 35 (12 Dec. 1953), 665; *The John Lewis Partnership Chronicle for Bon Marché*, 1 (22 Sept. 1947), 1, JLPA.

debates between employees and management regarding company practices and politics.¹³⁶

From the early twentieth century, the staff magazine was a key element in British and American retail human relations strategies that only increased in importance over time. From the beginning, such publications served as a means of top-down communication between company executives and their rank-and-file employees. During the Second World War and the Cold War, the communication of executive opinion and philosophy broadened to cover political issues outside the retail trade, explicitly politicising store communications and retail employment and soliciting *ideological loyalties* from employees. While it is impossible to know the extent to which shopworkers assimilated the opinions and worldviews expressed in employer-sanctioned magazines, the publications do offer a unique and thorough view of retailers' *efforts* to inculcate their staff with the values and political agendas of business.¹³⁷ Whether by creating a sense of coherent company culture, or by emphasising the role the shopworker could play in subverting Communism, staff magazines served both as a means of top-down communication and as an avenue for bringing worth and purpose to shop floor work.

* * *

In theory, the store publication was collectively owned and operated; in practice it was a domain highly restricted by managerial perspective and policy. On the one hand, staff magazine editors continually referred to their store publications as 'our' magazine, full of 'our' ideas or 'your' news, in efforts to solicit from employees news items, commentary and ideas for columns.¹³⁸ However, while staff magazines devoted a large amount of space to employees' benign news items, the majority neglected to allow space for letters to the editor. A 1951 NYU School of Retailing survey of 53 American department store house organs found that 29 per cent of print space in these publications was devoted to articles by management, including merchandise information and discussion of store policies.

¹³⁶ This policy was not without its problems: 'Anonymity,' *GJLP*, 42 (11 June 1960), 443; Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, 47-51, 56. This policy was sometimes explicitly formulated in terms of anti-unionism. 'Limitations of Trade Unionism,' *GJLP*, 32 (19 Aug. 1950), 338.

¹³⁷ For more on the benefits and challenges of using similar sources, see Sean O'Connell and Dilwyn Porter, 'Cataloguing Mail Order's Archives,' *Business Archives: Sources and History*, 80 (Nov. 2000), 44-54.

However, employees received *no* space for expression of their own opinions beyond news, store history or selling advice. Furthermore, the survey reported that of 53 stores with 'employee publications' only three involved employees in the editorial process.¹³⁹ The same trend was present in Britain. With the exception of the John Lewis Partnership *Gazette*, shopworkers' contributions to house organs were limited to benign news items. Even in the *Gazette*, John Spedan Lewis played the role of sponsor, functioning editor and chief contributor.¹⁴⁰ 'Communication' through store publications was generally of the top-down variety, with limited potential for employees' voices to be upwardly articulated.

British Staff Councils: A Collective, Democratic Model of Voice

While department and variety store employers relied on staff magazines for 'downward' communication of store policy and position, they were not oblivious to employee attitude surveys showing that shopworkers highly valued the opportunity to express their own opinions. In the mid-twentieth century, British department stores continued to rely on more formal venues for communication, such as representative staff councils that had been implemented during the inter-war years. In contrast, American department and variety stores created less formal avenues for expression of voice, particularly in non-union stores. This was in large part due to stipulations of the 1935 Wagner Act and consequent NLRB hearings which recognised trade union arguments that written grievance procedures explicitly formulated as an alternative to unionisation illegally infringed on employees' right to organise.¹⁴¹ Despite the differences between the British formal communications systems and the American informal ones, the goals were the same: to inhibit retail unionisation and to create a workplace atmosphere that not only allowed but encouraged activation of 'voice' as an alternative to 'exit' for shopworkers.

¹³⁸ 'The Harroldian Gazette Today,' *HG* 38 (January 1953), 9. 'The Field Glass is Your Newspaper,' *FG* 20 (4 May 1953), 2.

¹³⁹ 'Is Your Employee Publication an "Employee Publication"?' *JR* 27 (Spring 1951), 1-7, 18.

¹⁴⁰ See, for example, *GJLP* 27 (3 March 1945).

¹⁴¹ NRDGA, 'Employee Relations,' *Management and Personnel Forum*, 1947 (New York: NRDGA, 1947), 119-120. On company unions and employee representation in American stores and industry prior to the Wagner Act, see *Store Chat* supplement, June 1928, 'Personnel, Employees, Biographical Information,' Box 57, Accession No. 2117, HML. Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism*, 119-134.

Long before employee attitude surveys, many major British retail institutions formally implemented staff councils in response to a growing sense of unease in British labour relations immediately preceding and following the First World War. John Spedan Lewis was the first to do so, when he instituted the representative 'Committees for Communication between the Rank and File and Principal Management' in 1914, in order to facilitate communication between the bottom-most and top-most members of the organisation. Only rank-and-file employees were allowed to vote for representatives to the Committees or stand for election, with each seat representing no more than 36 employees. As of 1954, the Partnership had thirty-eight Committees for Communication, with at least one in each branch of the Partnership, which were required to meet on a nearly monthly basis.¹⁴² From 1919 Partners also elected two-thirds of representatives in the Partnership's Central Council and, from 1941, the majority of representatives in each Branch Council. These Councils had some limited decision-making power, but their greatest strength was in their power to lobby the Chief Executive for significant change in the business.¹⁴³ Importantly, these provisions were central to Lewis's contention that the Partnership was the industrial equivalent of Britain's democratic Parliamentary system.¹⁴⁴

Harrods department store in London was the next major British retailer to organise a Staff Council in 1917, which became a generally-elected representative Staff Council two years later.¹⁴⁵ The Harrods Council held annual elections and frequent meetings, usually reported in the *Harroddian Gazette*.¹⁴⁶ Perhaps surprisingly, the Co-operative retail societies were rather slow to pick up on this growing trend in British retail. Only after a decade of hostilities with the shopworkers' unions did the Co-operative Congress, in 1924, offer a resolution

¹⁴² Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, 54-54-58. For an example of Committee for Communication minutes from one branch, see 'Cavendish Council Proceedings, 1946-1956,' Accession number 545/a, JLPA. Committee minutes for all branches were published weekly in the *Gazette*.

¹⁴³ Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, 59-72, 135-150; Lewis, *Partnership For All*, 332-358. Flanders et al., *Experiment in Industrial Democracy*, 69-72.

¹⁴⁴ *The John Lewis Partnership Partners' Handbook*, 1951, p. 21-22, JLPA. From the outset, John Spedan Lewis used the general rules of House of Commons proceedings as a format for Central Council proceedings, Flanders et al., *Experiment in Industrial Democracy*, 54-69, esp. 54-56. Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, 135.

¹⁴⁵ 'Staff Council Election,' *HG* 5 (April 1917), 82. 'Staff Council News,' *HG* 5 (June 1917), 132-134. 'The Need for a Staff Council,' *HG* 8 (March 1920), 72-73. On the constitution and activities of staff councils at Harrods and Kendal Milne department stores in the post-war years, see 'Focus on Staff Councils,' *HG* 39 (April 1954), 138-142.

¹⁴⁶ For example, 'Sir Richard at Staff Council Meeting,' *HG* 42 (July 1957), 354-357.

suggesting that 'the time has arrived when the co-operative movement should seriously consider the question of how far the worker should have control of industry, and what share he should be given in the management.'¹⁴⁷ The following year, the Co-operative Congress recommended the establishment of joint advisory committees, but with little effect. As of 1935, fewer than three per cent of retail societies had joint advisory committees. Of those societies that had experimented with such bodies, the majority reported general failure resulting from 'encroachment upon management', apathy on the part of employees, and the limitations of a body with nothing more than advisory power.¹⁴⁸

The problems caused by the limited remit of representative staff councils in the Co-operative movement was a common one. The Partnership Committees, the Harrods Staff Council, and the Co-operative joint advisory committees had been explicitly formulated to relieve rather than increase pressure on management through expression of employee voice. In the Partnership, the Committees for Communication had no direct decision-making power of their own, and served only as consultative bodies. The representatively-elected Central and Branch Councils did have some decision-making power regarding staff amenities, but even these powers were severely curtailed by the powers of the Chairman granted him in the founding documents of the Partnership.¹⁴⁹

At Harrods, the Staff Council was initiated in part to be an alternative to unionisation or direct employee involvement in managerial decisions. In 1919, after stating that Harrods employees should be allowed to join trade unions if they wished, the Staff Manager and Chair of the Staff Council argued that 'the [trade union] movement should be noted by Staff Councillors as one *imperilling their prerogative*—one with a dangerous tendency to relegate their efforts to a secondary place in staff affairs.'¹⁵⁰ Similar sentiment was reiterated by the

¹⁴⁷ From *Co-operative Congress Report*, 1924, quoted in A. M. Carr-Saunders, P. Sargent Florence and Robert Peers, *Consumers' Co-operation in Great Britain: An Examination of the British Co-operative Movement* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938), 348.

¹⁴⁸ Frank Jones, 'Joint Consultation: Early History In The Co-operative Movement,' *CR* 25 (August 1951), 182-83; Frank Jones, 'Joint Consultation: Decline in Favour of Direct Representation,' *CR* 25 (September 1951), 196-97. Carr-Saunders et al., *Consumers' Co-operation in Great Britain*, 348-349.

¹⁴⁹ Flanders et al., *Experiment in Industrial Democracy*, 154-179.

¹⁵⁰ Italics in original, 'Staff Council Notes,' *HG* 7 (August 1919), 59-60. Early ambiguity over this position was evidenced by the Council's invitation to a leader of the Shop Assistants' Union (NAUSA&C) to speak to the Council in 1920. 'Visit of Mr. Hoffman,' *HG* 8 (April 1920), 98-100.

Council Chairman in a 1952 Council meeting.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, when the Staff Council Chairman requested in 1944 that the Council be allowed representation on the company's Board of Directors, the Directors side-stepped the request with the reply that staff were already represented through the Personnel Director.¹⁵²

It was in the Co-operative movement that staff councils were most explicitly instituted to limit employee participation and control in management. The issue was not unionisation—most retail societies had made trade union membership obligatory for their members in the inter-war years—but whether or not employees could be elected to boards of management with the same rights as consumer members of the movement.¹⁵³ When the Co-operative Union's Labour Advisor advocated the revival of joint councils in 1951, he argued that, 'if "industrial democracy" is to follow upon political democracy, the joint consultative body, in any trade or industry, is probably the best vehicle for its expression and one which we may well see grow and develop.'¹⁵⁴ This amounted to an open refutation of growing trade union and employee demands for Co-operative workers to be allowed to participate more directly in the managerial affairs of the retail societies for which they worked.¹⁵⁵ There was continued resistance to employee rights as members at the national level by the Co-operative Union and Co-operative Executive through the late 1950s. However, it must be noted that by 1953 a quarter of Co-operative retail societies allowed employees some form of representation on management committees.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ 'Opening Meeting of Harrods 1952 Staff Council,' *HG* 37 (July 1952), 215-216.

¹⁵² 'Staff Council's 25th Year,' *HG* 30 (May 1944), 106-107.

¹⁵³ On obligatory trade union membership, see Carr-Saunders et al., *Consumers' Co-operation in Great Britain*, 350-352.

¹⁵⁴ Frank Jones, 'Joint Consultation: Problems of Forming Consultative Bodies,' *CR* 25 (November 1951), 254-55. Frank Jones, 'Joint Consultation: Some Advisory Councils in Operation,' *CR* 25 (December 1951), 284-285. Arthur Maddison, 'Joint Consultation: Bristol Success Shows Need for New Approach,' *CR* 29 (May 1955), 154-55.

¹⁵⁵ For more on the long-run debate over employee representation on management committees, and on the joint advisory council as an alternative to direct representation, see Carr-Saunders et al., *Consumers' Co-operation in Great Britain*, 88-90, 293-295, 349-350. Sidney & Beatrice Webb, *The Consumers' Co-operative Movement* (London: Longmans, Green, 1921), 43-46, 182-193, 338-349. J. Pollitt, *The Policy of the Movement in Regard to Employees' Welfare and Joint Committees* (Manchester: Co-operative Union, 1924), 2-11, in *Pamphlets on Co-operation*, volume 8, CA. Arnold Bonner and Walter Padley, *Employees and Full Membership Rights* (Manchester: National Co-operative Men's Guild, c. 1949). Long, 'Efficiency Without Fear,' 42-44. W. Hazell, 'Gateways to the Boardroom: Employee Representation and the Popular Gate,' *CR* 31 (August 1957), 174-176.

¹⁵⁶ Frank Jones, 'Employees in Management: "Attitude Correct" Is General Verdict,' *CR*, 27 (December 1953), 267-270.

During the post-war years, the John Lewis Partnership, Harrods and the Co-operative Retail Societies continued to rely for communication on committees implemented in the inter-war years to provide avenues for the expression of employee voice. However, without a significant degree of power-sharing accompanying these committees, they met with limited success. In 1963, the Committees for Communication came under attack from Partners writing to the *Gazette* who argued that the Committees were of little use for addressing major workplace problems.¹⁵⁷ The limitations of the Committees and of the Central and Branch Councils frustrated many Partners' expectations that expression of voice would lead to change, prompting consistent demands for more democratic power-sharing within the Partnership in the post-war years.¹⁵⁸

Importantly, Partners' demands were often couched in the ideological rhetoric Lewis himself provided. In one of the most potent critiques, an anonymous contributor to the *Gazette* argued,

It seems to many that the Partnership, in its present stage of evolution, is still too paternalistic in conception to be other than a pale imitation of such degree of democracy as this country has achieved. If one might draw analogies with the British Constitution—and what better model could one choose?—one might liken the Chairmanship to a hereditary monarchy, but one wielding real power.¹⁵⁹

In the post-war years, contributors to the *Gazette* continually challenged John Spedan Lewis (and later his successors) to live up to the Partnership's stated ideals by expanding the power of elected representatives within the Partnership.¹⁶⁰ Nevertheless, an American visitor to the Partnership in 1970 commented on the values of the Partnership's ideals, but also on the demoralisation among Partners caused by the failure to more radically implement those ideals.¹⁶¹

At Harrods, the Staff Council served primarily to influence the shape of fringe benefits programmes following the Second World War. Employee Staff

¹⁵⁷ 'Readers' Letters,' *GJLP* 45 (31 August to 28 September 1963).

¹⁵⁸ See also debates about the powers of the Chairman, H. Schweitzer, 'The Chairman and the Council,' *GJLP* 45 (11 May 1963), 356-357, and 'Readers' Letters,' 45 (18 May 1963), 387-388. Also, 'Partnership Fundamentals,' *GJLP* 34 (11 Oct. 1952), 492, and 34 (1 Nov. 1952), 545-46.

¹⁵⁹ 'Partnership Fundamentals,' (18 Oct. 1952), 507.

¹⁶⁰ 'One Man, One Vote,' *GJLP* 31 (26 Feb. 1949), 42-44. 'First Impressions of the Partnership,' *GJLP* 27 (11 Aug. 1945), 325-26. 'A Vicious Circle?' *GJLP* 34 (30 Aug. 1952), 405-06. 'Democracy,' *GJLP* 36 (25 Sept. 1954), 714-16. 'Some Common Notions,' *GJLP* 34 (26 April 1952), 161-62.

¹⁶¹ Howard B. Jacobson, '18,850 Partners in Retailing,' *Stores* 52 (November 1970), 16, 18, 78.

Councillors did raise important issues regarding wages, working hours, pensions and so on.¹⁶² However, rather than defending these demands, the elected Chair of the Council routinely defended the management's position that such conditions would be met when profits allowed, and that staff should, in turn work hard to improve profits.¹⁶³

In the Co-operative retail societies, the general failure of joint advisory committees and consistent refusal on the part of the Co-operative Executive to sanction more employee control in management led to ongoing hostilities with the shopworkers' unions. Again, shopworkers and their unions used the ideological framework provided by their employers to argue for more democratic power-sharing in their places of employment. In the early post-war years the main representative of Co-operative employees, the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW) consistently maintained that if the Co-operative movement were truly democratic, employees would be allowed the same rights as all other members. Compulsory union membership and joint advisory councils could not alone meet the standards of industrial democracy, they argued, without some direct route for employees to influence the working conditions and business practice of their Co-operative societies. More to the point, unions and their supporters within the movement argued that democracy meant equality of citizenship and the opportunity for consumers and producers to have equal footing in Co-operative business. The model they supported was one of 'co-partnership' between producers and consumers, each with their own representative bodies and decision-making powers, with neither exerting total control over the workplace.¹⁶⁴

In sum, many major British retail institutions formalised systems of voice through the creation of staff councils in the inter-war years. However, the increasing apathy and scepticism with which shopworkers received these institutions in the post-war years suggests that their purpose was undermined when voice was not accompanied by power. Still, the ongoing employee arguments for greater power-sharing that were rhetorically formulated to draw on

¹⁶² 'Sir Richard at Opening Meeting of New Staff Council,' *HG* 44 (July 1959), 369-372.

'Opening Meeting of New Staff Council,' *HG* 45 (July 1960), 431-433.

¹⁶³ M. A. Hamilton-Thomas, 'Staff Council Anniversary,' *HG* 30 (May 1945), 205-207. 'Staff Council,' *HG* 27 (May 1939), 130-131. A. Spence, 'The Cost of Being a Department Store,' *HG* 55 (January/February 1970), 3-4.

the ideals and principles of democracy put forward by executives in the John Lewis Partnership and the Co-operatives demonstrated that those establishments had successfully elicited *ideological loyalties* from at least some of their employees. The problem for retail executives then, was that once deployed, such loyalties were virtually impossible to manipulate.

Human Relations, American-Style: An Individualist Voluntary Model of Voice

Post-war human relations programmes in America focused less on creating new structures of representation to facilitate the exercise of voice, and more on improving the individual relationships between employees and their supervisors and between the shop floor and the Personnel department. The goal was not necessarily to transform the shopworker's job itself, but to master 'the art of dealing with people in such a manner that they will want to conduct themselves in a desired fashion'.¹⁶⁵ By reforming supervisory relationships and improving informal grievance procedures in the post-war period, American department and variety store employers hoped to help employees feel better fulfilled by their work through personal attention and affirmation; to resolve the workplace personality conflicts that undermined co-operative work cultures; and to facilitate the airing of personal and interpersonal grievances so as not to compound the 'us-them' mentality among employees which could lead to unionisation.¹⁶⁶

The linchpin of post-war American human relations programmes was the reformation of the relationship between shop floor workers and their immediate supervisors. Employee attitude surveys and anecdotal experiences led employers to conclude that shopworkers' opinions of their employers were formed not through broad trends in store managerial style, but through individual experiences with their immediate supervisors.¹⁶⁷ Consequently, the immediate supervisors of rank-and-file retail workers bore the brunt of managerial efforts to satisfy shopworkers' emotional and psychological expectations of their labour. Buyers

¹⁶⁴ Alan Birch (General Secretary of USDAW), *Industrial Relations in Co-operative Employment* (Manchester: Co-operative Co-partnership Propaganda Committee, c. 1950s), esp. 14-17. Bonner and Padley, *Employees and Full Membership Rights*, 3-7.

¹⁶⁵ Donald K. Beckley, *Improving Human Relations in Retail* (Boston: Simons College, 1955), 11. Also, 'If You Don't Like Their "Attitude"', *Stores* 34 (March 1952), 47, 60.

¹⁶⁶ On employee and human relations as anti-unionism, see NRDGA, 'Employee Relations,' 97-127. 'Employee Relations,' *Stores* 31 (February 1949), 65-66.

¹⁶⁷ See above. Also, 'Are We Motivating Our Future Execs Not to Perform, Not to Develop?' *Stores* 49 (November 1967), 35-37.

and assistant buyers in selling departments and immediate lower-level supervisors in non-selling departments were faced with the immeasurable challenge of negotiating the complex and often contradictory relationships between entry-level staff and upper-level management. In non-union stores particularly, supervisors were to be not only the voice of management to employees, but the representatives of employees to management.¹⁶⁸

In his 1955 treatise on *Improving Human Relations in Retailing*, Donald K. Beckley, Director of the Prince School of Retailing in Boston, advocated the transformation of supervisory work according to the same standards of emotional labour by which shopworkers' interactions with customers were judged. Beckley advised that supervisors be trained to use respect instead of fear to motivate employees. He advocated the development of workplace personal relationships between employees and their supervisors to instil the trust that could soften the rigidities of bipolar labour/management differences. He encouraged supervisors to move from telling and instructing toward feeling and commiserating, advising that the latter approach would facilitate expression of voice while allowing supervisors greater insight into the means by which employee opinions were constructed—and the means by which such opinions could be changed. Beckley argued that supervisors should offer personal recognition of employee achievements to build confidence and job satisfaction. Finally, in addition to their own responsibilities, lower-level supervisors were to find ways to allow employees more room for creativity and responsibility in their work.¹⁶⁹

Beckley's advice, which reflected broader trends in retail human relations programmes in the US, made lower-level supervisors responsible for managing employee emotions in the same way that sales and service employees were responsible for managing customers' emotions. However, just as salespeople had little control over the external factors affecting customers' emotional states, lower-level supervisors had little power to change the job structures and

¹⁶⁸ NRMA, *Communications Downward and Upward*, 24-25, 56-58. NRDGA, 'Employee Relations,' 121, 122. 'Slowdown—Why? Speed Up—How?' *JR* 24 (October 1948), 89, 95-96. 'The Employee,' *Stores* 32 (February 1950), 26-27.

¹⁶⁹ Beckley, *Improving Human Relations*, 18-20, 22-23. For general advice, see also 'Human Relations in Supervision,' *Stores* 41 (June 1959), 44-45. On forming personal relationships of mutual respect, JC Penney Co., *Know Your Associates Through Personal Interviews*, JCPA. On increasing responsibility, 'Are We Motivating,' 35-37. On training for the supervisory role, Gladys Chase Gilmore, 'Aids For Training Programs,' *DSE* 10 (November 1947), 88; 11 (February 1948), 70.

workplace conditions that made for discontented employees. In particular, Beckley advised that supervisors help employees avoid apathy, mental resignation, lying, absenteeism, emotional instability and aggression, despite the fact that supervisors had little control over the causes of these emotions.¹⁷⁰ To be fair, retail trade journals and conferences at times specifically advocated training in human relations at all levels, including the highest executives.¹⁷¹ However, as executives spent more and more time in their offices managing ever-expanding businesses, lower-level supervisors became increasingly responsible for shopfloor morale.

One symptom of the attention given the supervisory relationship as a consequence of employee attitude surveys was the implementation of 'sponsor' systems in many American department and variety stores from the mid-1940s. Although Marshall Field's department store in Chicago was among the first to use sponsors, the practice was widespread in American department and variety stores by the 1950s. The sponsor's role was to be the most immediate contact between the new employee and the store. His or her responsibilities included introducing the new employee to the job and providing basic training and support.¹⁷² In 1947 Marshall Field's divisional operating manager reported that a new system of 'on-the-job orientation' and follow up on employee progress, of which the sponsor was an integral part, had helped to reduce labour turnover from 33 to 13 per cent.¹⁷³ It seems attention to the findings of employee attitude surveys showing that employees valued personal contact and attention paid off, at least in *fundamental loyalties*.

Allowing for the significance of the supervisor in American human relations programmes, he or she was only part of a larger system of informal

¹⁷⁰ Beckley, *Improving Human Relations*, 34-5. NRMA, *Communications Downward and Upward*, 52-56.

¹⁷¹ Dakins, 'The Art of Human Relations,' 7, 9. 'A New Dimension of the Executive Task,' *Stores* 38 (January 1956), 28-30, 32. 'People Are More Important Than Things,' *Stores* 36 (March 1954), 7. 'Management Perspective: What Makes a Leader,' *Stores* 38 (October 1956), 5, 9. 'The Impact of Management Style on Superior Store Performance,' *Stores* 50 (February 1968), 9-10, 12. 'Gimbels Five Year Plan: Personnel Training for Executives,' *DSE* 9 (August 1946), 18-19. 'Teaching Executives the ABC's of handling Employees,' *DSE* 9 (September 1946), 52, 64-67. NRDGA, 'Employee Relations,' 99. NRMA, *Communications Downward and Upward*, 32-40.

¹⁷² *Careers in Retail Selling* (Chicago: Institute for Research, 1952), 16, 21-23; and Marshall Field & Co., 'The Sponsor's Job,' printed leaflet, 1947, both in 'Training Division' folder, MFA. Harold N. Moore, 'Indoctrination in a Department Store Job,' *DSE* 11 (October 1948), 114, 118. 'Another Step Forward . . . Our New Sponsor System,' *SC* 33 (Nov. 1951), 12.

¹⁷³ Proceedings of the NRDGA, *BNRDGA* 29 (February 1947), 44.

grievance-alleviation processes. In stores with single or multiple unions, grievance procedures were usually arranged by union contract, disallowing the settling of discontents between employee and manager at an individual level. Grievance procedures in non-union stores generally consisted not of a single, formal procedure, but of a range of 'open door' policies which encouraged employees to air their concerns privately and confidentially with supervisors, Personnel Department staff or, in some cases, executives.¹⁷⁴ Many American department stores, including Marshall Field's, went so far as to employ on-site psychologists and counsellors who would listen to employees' problems in confidence.¹⁷⁵ More commonly, as at JC Penney's, human relations experts advised the routinisation of personal interviews between employees and Personnel staff or managers to facilitate the airing of grievances.¹⁷⁶ As a more direct route into the minds of those employees reluctant to take their grievances to management on their own initiative, Personnel Departments made continued use of morale surveys as a key component of the voice activation/grievance avoidance feedback loop.¹⁷⁷ Clearly, the development over the course of the post-war period of Personnel Departments that co-ordinated all of these activities was central to the implementation and co-ordination of a wide range of human relations programmes in American retail stores.¹⁷⁸

It is difficult to determine the degree to which British department stores and multiples shifted their communications strategies toward the less formal human relations trends of their American counterparts as more formal staff councils proved problematic. From the late 1940s, the Co-operative Union Labour Department routinely advised large and medium-sized retail societies to employ a staff manager specifically for the purpose of implementing more consistent personnel policies and informal routes for the airing of grievances. However, the Central Executive did not always agree and at times actively

¹⁷⁴ NRDGA, 'Handling Employee Grievances,' *Management and Personnel Forum, 1947* (New York: NRDGA, 1947), 117-127.

¹⁷⁵ Marshall Field & Co., *You and Your Job*, (Marshall Field & Co., 1952), 9, 44-46, MFA; and Baker and France, *Personnel Administration*, 85-88.

¹⁷⁶ JC Penney Co., *Know Your Associates*, 1-12. NRDGA, 'Employee Relations,' 100.

¹⁷⁷ 'Personnel In Distribution,' *DSE* 10 (April 1947), 21, 34. See references for employee attitude surveys above.

¹⁷⁸ On the role and growing importance of American Personnel Departments, see 'How the Department Store Can Improve Its Personnel Relations,' *JR* 18 (February 1942), 2-4, 9. 'Management Employee Relations Are Good At the William Hengerer Co.,' *DSE* 12 (November 1949), 94-97. Baker and France, *Personnel Administration*, esp. 15-24.

discouraged compliance by local retail societies.¹⁷⁹ In contrast, an American visitor's summary of a visit to Beattie's department store in Wolverhampton in 1970 reported that the store had a labour turnover rate half that of comparable stores. The author and Beattie's Chairman attributed this success in maintaining employees' *fundamental loyalties* to recent implementation of human relations policies that incorporated employees into policy-making processes through informal discussion periods between staff and managers.¹⁸⁰ By the 1960s, most British department stores' and multiples' personnel policies probably fell somewhere between those of the Co-operative movement and Beattie's. However, as the American commentary on Beattie's suggests, British and American retail human relations styles were mutually informed by continual transatlantic exchange.¹⁸¹

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In theory, the underlying principle of human relations programmes was to move away from the paternalistic practice of telling employees what their attitudes should be, and toward a more conciliatory *process* which would allow employees an important and meaningful role in the course of day-to-day activities. Human relations experts and Personnel Department directors claimed that the overall purpose in such changes was to give more attention to the employee as an individual, acknowledging that employees had motivations, concerns and opinions of their own. The oft-repeated motto of human relations proponents was, 'People don't like to be treated as means to someone else's ends; they like to be treated as ends in themselves.'¹⁸² The basic premise was that given more personal acknowledgement and responsibility, and more opportunity to exercise voice over exit, shopworkers would derive a greater sense of self-respect and self-worth through their work so that they felt less like underappreciated members of a

¹⁷⁹ R. Matthews, 'Improving Employee Relations,' *CR* 22 (September 1948), 179-180. Frank Jones, 'Changes in Management,' *CR* 27 (December 1953), 266. 'Issues for Blackpool,' *CR* 32 (November 1958), 248-250.

¹⁸⁰ Howard B. Johnson, 'What Motivations Work Today?' *Stores* 52 (December 1970), 33-34, 37.

¹⁸¹ One venue for such exchange was a 1953 European/American conference on human relations, 'International Conference at Zurich,' *GJLP* 35 (22 August 1935), 424. Else Herzberg, Marks & Spencer's training programme director described their programme to an American NRDGA Personnel Group conference in 1950, 'Employee Learning,' *Stores* 32 (February 1950), 27, 29.

¹⁸² Dakins, 'The Art of Human Relations,' 7, 9.

selling apparatus, and more like the important individuals they wished to become.¹⁸³

In practice, this worked to some extent, as evidenced by the Marshall Field's and Beattie's decreased labour turnover rates. In 1948 Marks and Spencer's also announced a decrease in catering staff turnover rates from the previous year, from 92 to 54 per cent as a result of better communication with staff, from the initial interview to supervisory follow-up.¹⁸⁴ However, the improvement of employee morale and loyalty always remained a function of the ultimate managerial goals: higher productivity, lower staff turnover, and minimised opportunities for unionisation.¹⁸⁵ In effect, most human relations programmes continued to focus more on helping employees understand managerial perspectives than vice versa. Those who advocated personal and group interviews advised their use as an outlet for employee grievances, but focused more on the opportunity offered managers to 'explain management's point of view to the employees' during these sessions.¹⁸⁶ Similarly, in the one key house organ where employees were allowed to vent opinions and concerns through letters to the editor, such letters were not allowed to stand on their own. John Spedan Lewis or other editorial staff of the *Gazette* diligently replied to controversial letters in order to restate managerial perspectives on the issue in conflict, sometimes reinforcing rigid employee/management debates ad infinitum.¹⁸⁷

Where possible, many Personnel Departments did make changes in workplace practices to resolve individual and group grievances. However, their solutions tended to be superficial: changing job titles to imply higher status, shifting undesirable work from a favoured and loyal employee to one less so, or

¹⁸³ 'There Are Laws Against Pushing People Around,' *Stores* 32 (April 1950), 13-15.

¹⁸⁴ 'Labour Turnover Decreased,' in *Staff Management in Catering*, 2-3, in *Staff Management News* 7 (1949), K4/7, M&SA.

¹⁸⁵ Beckley, *Improving Human Relations*, 7-10. 'The Heart of Good Selling,' *Stores* 38 (January 1956), 41-42. 'Chain Store Human Relations,' 161-167, 186. 'Slowdown—Why?' 93-94.

Employee motivation was crucial for other store functions, like catching shoplifters, 'The Use of Motivation Techniques In Store Security Training,' *Stores* 41 (September 1959), 45-46, 48.

¹⁸⁶ Baker and France, *Personnel Administration*, 88. NRDGA, *Communications Downward and Upward*, 46-48. JC Penney Co., *Know Your Associates*, 4.

¹⁸⁷ Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, 51. For critiques of Lewis's writing and response styles, see 'Letters to the Editor,' *GJLP* 28 (16 Feb. 1946), 39; 'Free Speech,' *GJLP* 31 (26 Feb. 1949), 42-43; 'The Journalism,' *GJLP* 35 (16 Jan. 1954), 747-48; 'The Partnership's Journalism,' *GJLP* 34 (27 Sept. 1952), 457-458; "'The Gazette" Of The Future?' *GJLP* 37 (14 Jan. 1956), 1261.

allowing a somewhat more liberal dress code.¹⁸⁸ One American advocate argued the advantages of such changes as follows: 'The porter no longer simply scrubs floors. He becomes the caretaker who prepares the house for the invited guests (customers). The elevator operator ceases to open and close doors and call floors. She becomes the hostess for the store, who welcomes by her friendly manner and her interest the invited guest.' The author advised that such superficial changes could compensate for rising personnel costs by decreasing employee demands for higher wages.¹⁸⁹

The goal of most human relations programmes as implemented in British and American department stores and multiples was not to transform the retail job significantly or to implement real and sustainable systems of industrial democracy. The overall aim was simply to change employees' attitudes about their work, to help them feel more important and useful, to increase feelings of recognition and job satisfaction, and to help employees *feel* that managers were genuinely interested in their personal problems as part of the human condition, not simply as inhibitors of improved job performance. Simply put, human relations programmes were intended to help employees find ways of altering their behaviours and emotional response patterns to fit the job, not vice versa.¹⁹⁰ When necessary, this meant a visit to the company doctor to help employees better cope with the stresses causing physical ailments, rather than alleviating the causes of stress inherent in retail work.¹⁹¹

Shopworkers in stores with human relations programmes were no less cogs in the selling machine, interchangeable individual parts that could be maintained or dismissed according to managerial will. They were just better oiled with individual praise, attention and feedback in order to effect higher morale, deeper *functional loyalties*, and a more efficient engine of sales production. This is not to suggest that staff magazines, representative staff councils and human

¹⁸⁸ 'Keeping Employes Contented,' *DSE* 10 (January 1947), 120-121. The John Lewis Partnership had a Committee on Business Dress which routinely researched and addressed debates about workplace dress regulations. For example, see 'Business Dress: The Verbatim Report of the Council's Debate,' *GJLP* 38 (29 September 1956), 759-562; 'Business Dress' (Chairman's Memo 5753), *GJLP* 42 (2 January 1960), 1095-1097. On liberalisation of dress codes at Marshall Field's, see 'Women's Dress Standards,' *Retail Executive Office Notices*, No. 954 (2 September 1947).

¹⁸⁹ Edward J. Warmbier, 'Mr. President—Let's Talk About the Kid,' *JR* 24 (April 1948), 55-59.

¹⁹⁰ NRDGA, *Communications Downward and Upward*, 41-42.

¹⁹¹ 'Advances in Personnel Management,' (August 1947), 22, 49.

relations programmes did not make for a better work culture for some shopworkers, but that retail managers maintained control of the decisions that would have most directly addressed employee concerns to find pleasure and meaning in work.

Making Careers: Professionalisation and Promotion

Susan Porter Benson has argued that American department store managers began implementing training programmes and democratising promotion scales in the inter-war years, in tandem with increased attention to paternalism and welfare work, in order to address problems with salesmanship and reputedly poor job status among shopworkers.¹⁹² Although these efforts waned during the Great Depression, problems with labour turnover, intensification of the 'crisis' in salesmanship during the Second World War, and employee attitude surveys showing that employees valued job status and job security cumulatively meant that British and American department and variety store employers intensified their efforts to professionalise their trade in the post-war years. Skilled in the art of recruiting customer loyalties by improving store image and public relations, store managers hoped that by improving the public image of shop work, they could recruit and maintain more *fundamentally* and *functionally loyal* employees.

As with paternalism, employers' efforts at professionalisation capitalised on shopworkers' ambitions for upward social mobility. British and American department and variety store directors imagined that professionalisation of shop work would lower personnel turnover and improve skills of salesmanship if employees could begin thinking of their work in the store as a progressive career track in a valuable trade, instead of a temporary job on the way to another profession. Recruitment efforts, store training programmes, retail trade schools and revision of in-store employment and promotions policies therefore encouraged shopworkers to embrace retail professionalism as the key to personal material security and social advancement. Programmes of professionalisation focused on the individual employee, encouraging him or her to build a career from the ground up with the materials available, mastering skills of customer satisfaction in order to progress up the ladder of personal advancement. The

¹⁹² Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 124-176.

construction of customer loyalties and employee loyalties were thus intricately intertwined when shopworkers came to believe that serving the customer well would mean improved status and security in the stores of their employment.

Professionalisation

British and American merchants frequently blamed the tight labour market of the war years for the lower education and experience level of recruits to the retail trade after 1940. In effect, merchants attempted in the early post-war years to rejuvenate the public image of retail work among potential recruits, and particularly among university graduates. Managers and Personnel directors focused their energies on improving the prestige factor of store employment. They aimed to appeal to mature, career-driven recruits by transforming retail employment from short-run, low-skill work into a venerable profession.

Retail employers' efforts at professionalising their trade started at the very beginning of the employment cycle. In their efforts to improve the image of retail work, individual retailers and retail associations such as the Drapers' Chamber of Trade in Britain and the NRDGA in America published leaflets and brochures on retailing for potential recruits. These leaflets described the history and traditions of the department store, highlighting the importance of the employee's role in maintaining the service and emporial pleasures customers had come to expect. However, sales and 'sales-supporting' work were not described to potential employees in deferential terms as they had previously been, but in terms of the training, skill and personal advancement new recruits could acquire through retail employment. The long hours, low wages and 'inferiority complexes' of pre-war shop work were made to seem a thing of the past. In their place was a new workplace of air conditioning, shorter hours, first-hand glimpses of new fashions and merchandise, 'wide educational opportunities', and an extracurricular social life through store social groups. A sense of career and life potential pervaded such leaflets, promising employees training in new skills, work with 'highly specialised staff', the opportunity to take advantage of stores' promotion-from-within policies, and 'a career full of interest in the present and with promise for the future'.¹⁹³ In recruitment leaflets of the early post-war years, store managers

¹⁹³ *Working With Harrods*, 1958. HCA.

continually attempted to disassociate shop work from its problematic reputation from the pre-war years, infusing it instead with a new sense of careerism and professionalism for both women and men.¹⁹⁴ Similar ends were met by the NRDGA and local American retailers associations' 'Careers in Retailing' exhibitions for students and teachers from the late 1940s.¹⁹⁵

For those recruits who made it through the interview process, the personnel training department would offer them their first exposure to their new work and workplace. Although nascent training programmes had been implemented in many department stores over the course of the early twentieth century, these programmes relied heavily on the buyers in each department, requiring that they train and supervise salespeople in addition to their other responsibilities. Training programmes had begun to come into their own in the 1920s in America, but were cut back, refined or even dropped under Depression-era pressures.¹⁹⁶ The impact of the Second World War put a premium on long-term skilled workers in the retail labour force in both Britain and America, providing stores with the incentive necessary to transform formal and informal training methods. Through precedents in employee training set by the American government, the war also provided the technical and methodological tools necessary to modernise retail training programmes.¹⁹⁷ By the late 1940s training programmes were beginning to make a showing in Britain and a comeback in the

¹⁹⁴ *Working With Harrods*, 1949; *What Do You Know About Harrods?*, 1955; *A Career With Harrods*, 1955, HCA. *Marks & Spencer Career News*, 1971, K8/295, M&SA. Donald K. Beckley, & William Boyd Logan, *The Retail Salesperson At Work*. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1948). 'Burnley Traders' Drive for Recruitment', *DR* 13 (September 1952), 24. The following brochure is an exception, in that it outlined some of the unattractive features of retail work as well: *Careers in Retail Selling*. On problems with the image of retail work in the early twentieth century, see Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 135-136. The emphasis on promotion opportunities in recruitment brochures continued into the 1990s for Montgomery Wards, 'Employee Recruiting Brochures 1990s' folder, Box 166, MWC.

¹⁹⁵ 'Selling the Retail Career,' *Stores* 31 (October 1949), 21. 'Seattle's Business Education Day,' *Stores* 34 (September 1952), 34, 36. 'Recruiting in Colleges and High Schools,' *Stores* 39 (February 1957), 63-68. Stephen K. Small, 'You Can Start a Community Program for Careers in Retailing,' *Stores* 39 (September 1957), 13, 48; 'Careers Week Offers Opportunity To Apply Salesmanship to Recruiting,' *Stores* 40 (June 1958), 47-49.

¹⁹⁶ Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 147-153.

¹⁹⁷ On the relation between labour market conditions and training, see Williams, 'Intensified Sales Training,' 21, 52-55. 'Training Drives to Reduce Staff Costs,' *DR* (8 April 1950), 11. On lessons learned from the US government training, see Adelaide Hulsebach, 'Training for Better Service,' *JR* 22 (February 1946), 7-10. 'Job Training Cuts Non-Selling Personnel Expenses,' *DSE* 12 (February 1949), 100-101.

US as more department stores were devoting personnel and funds exclusively to the training of shopworkers through new or revamped training departments.¹⁹⁸

In the post-war years, buyers continued to play an important role in educating their sales force about the qualities and value of new merchandise lines, but training departments took on the responsibility for cultivating in shopworkers the skills necessary for the most efficient performance of their workplace responsibilities.¹⁹⁹ While British and American merchants had come to rely on salesmanship as the key to unlocking higher sales and wider profit margins, improvements in salesmanship did not come easily or inexpensively. As one shopkeeper argued, 'Efficient sales people aren't born—they're made!' He made clear the primary purpose of training departments as he argued that, 'Alert, enthusiastic, well trained sales people make for increased sales and happier consumer relations.'²⁰⁰

While the explicit purpose of training activities was to improve customer service and sales productivity, training programmes also played an important function in the professionalisation of shop work. In retailers' efforts to transform the public image of shop work from that of unskilled labour to that of skilled craftsmanship, the very existence of a training department elicited allusions to traditions of craft apprenticeship. The opportunity to train in a reputable urban emporium was advertised to potential employees through the recruitment leaflets described above, as an opportunity to acquire new skills and embark on a career with a 'craftsmanship' of its own. In both initial and on-going training activities, salespeople, clerical workers and other 'backroom' employees were trained in the ever-evolving science of shop floor skill and efficiency. Salespeople learned techniques of suggestive selling and 'selling up' in addition to sales check and cash register technique; telephone operators learned proper telephone etiquette; workroom employees learned skills of tailoring; and clerical staff received lessons

¹⁹⁸ The John Lewis Partnership set up an Education Committee to organise training activities in 1943, 'Education: The Work of the Partnership's Education Committee,' *GJLP* 34 (19 July 1952), 323. On modernisation of training in the British Co-operatives, James Leonard, *New Methods in the Education of Co-operative Employees* (London: South Suburban Co-operative Society, 1948), CA. On the potential for training departments to lower labour turnover during WWII, see Norris A. Brisco, 'Retailing Education in Wartime,' *JR* 18 (October 1942), 65; Williams, 'Intensified Sales Training,' 54-55.

¹⁹⁹ On the continued role for buyers, see 'Training is the Buyer's Job,' *BNRDGA* 28:8 (August 1946), 18-19, 42-46. 'Training Demands Buyer Attention,' *Stores* 33 (January 1951), 46-48.

²⁰⁰ 'Taking the Green Out of Salespeople,' *DSE* 12 (March 1949), 64. *NRDGA, Training for Profits*. 'Training Drives To Reduce Staff Costs,' 11.

in typing, filing and other office skills.²⁰¹ However, these basic skills were supplemented in employee training programmes with instruction and practice in the skills of interpersonal relations—skills that could prove helpful not only for securing customer purchases and loyalties, but for proficiently negotiating the social arena of class relationships outside of store life.²⁰²

Retail trade organisations in the US and Britain, and the Harvard Business School in Boston, furthered training in interpersonal skills by publishing research and advice in trade journals on the development of new training techniques meant to improve absorption rates for skills of emotional or interpersonal labour. Skits, role-playing and small group activities superseded lectures as the means for imparting the psychology of selling work; a plethora of new publications on salesmanship and on the needs and desires of consumers were made available to shopworkers through store libraries; and television and film made it possible for trainees to see how experts used their training to handle complex and challenging customer relations successfully.²⁰³ Furthermore, staff magazines, manufacturers' publications, and excursions to local factories provided salespeople with the merchandise information that could help to satiate customer demands.²⁰⁴

The development of new training materials and methods did not progress autonomously in the US or Britain. For example, the 'By Jupiter' training film

²⁰¹ Constance Talbot, 'A Training Program,' *DSE* 8 (October 1945), 58-59, 66. 'Doing Something About Retail Selling,' *DSE* 20 (May 1957), 38-39, 42. On post-war developments in non-selling training, see 'Job Training Cuts Non-Selling Personnel Expenses,' 100-101. 'Training Brochures 1950s' folder, Box 167; Box 169, Montgomery Wards collection, CHS. On professionalisation in Montgomery Wards' new training programme from 1956, see 'Training Program Stresses a New Concept in Selling,' *For-Ward* 4 (March 1959), 8.

²⁰² The best example of this was the 'By Jupiter' courtesy campaign at Marshall Field's. 'Store Manners,' *FG* 21 (26 Oct 1953). 'Courtesy Week Talk,' *FG* 13 (3 June 1946), 3. 'Complete Instructions on How to Use "By Jupiter"', in 'Training Division' folder, MFA. See also, Edward J. Warmbier, 'Getting the Most Out of Store Personnel,' *JR* 23 (December 1947), 138-145; Abraham Bernstein, 'Sales Training Programs Related to Individuals' Needs,' *DSE* 16 (November 1953), 140-141.

²⁰³ 'More About USA Retailing Productivity Report,' *DR* (15 November 1952), 20-22. 'Visual Aids for Staff Training,' *DR* (25 October 1952), 20. NRDGA, *Management and Personnel Forum, 1947* (New York: NRDGA, 1947), 177-191. 'Job Instruction Training,' *DSE* 9 (October 1946), 36, 38. 'The Role of Films in Department Store Management,' *DSE* 10 (March 1947), 16-17, 24. 'Visual Aids in Retail Training,' *DSE* 12 (January 1949), 119.

²⁰⁴ 'Do You Know Your Business?' *Cav Mag* (June 1949), HF12/5/2, UGA. 'They Make It—We Sell It' series in *In Company*, for example 3 (Summer 1961), 14-19, HF 1/8/1/1/3, UGA. For examples of merchandise publications, see Boxes 62, 165; 'Sales Training Guides' folders, Box 163, MWC. T. Ellison and A. N. Hill, *Salesmanship in the Drapery Department* (Manchester: Co-operative Union, c. 1934), CA. On the importance customers placed on merchandise information in the post-war years, see 'The Job of Being a Customer,' *Stores* 30 (Sept. 1948), 27, 67-68; 'A Customer's Viewpoint of Salespeople,' *DSE* 16 (July 1953), 146; and 'An Open Letter to Retail

produced by Marshall Field's in Chicago to promote higher forms of courtesy among shopworkers was aired not only in Britain and the US, but in Canada, Australia and France as well.²⁰⁵ British and American department stores also frequently sent buyers and personnel staff across the Atlantic to learn more about the training methods and employment structures of their retailing counterparts.²⁰⁶ Furthermore, American retail trade journals published articles on training and professionalisation by British experts.²⁰⁷

The management of shopworkers' job loyalties through training in salesmanship and other retail skills did not necessarily begin upon employment with a store. In the inter-war years, many American department stores affiliated themselves with local schools and universities whose students could take courses in salesmanship, fashion and management skills while working part-time and gaining invaluable first-hand experience. Such programmes were made possible by passage of the George Deen Act in 1936, which extended federal vocational training funds to cover education in the distributive trades. In the post-war years joint training programmes proliferated in the US, as retailers attempted to transform the public image of retailing to a profession worthy of a specialised education. By 1958, the US Office of Education reported that there were 1500 secondary schools across the country offering distributive education courses.²⁰⁸ Merchants and educators encouraged students on distributive education programmes to seek employment in their store of training following completion of their degrees. Joint training programmes with educational institutions were crucial in that sense to retailers' efforts at professionalising the trade, insofar as they encouraged employee-trainees to consider their training a down payment on a long-term career.²⁰⁹

Salespeople,' 130. On factory trips see 'A Great Month for Inter-House Visits,' *HG* 35 (May 1950), 103-104.

²⁰⁵ By Jupiter, in 'Training Division' folder, MFA. 'Courtesy in the Limelight,' *DSE* 10 (Dec. 1947), 36. 'You've Gotta Smile to Join "By-Jupiter"', *For-Ward* 2 (February 1958), 1, 11; "'By Jupiter" Is Sweeping Country, Many Stores Scheduling Contests,' *For-Ward* 3 (March 1958), 12.

²⁰⁶ 'Training of Selling Staff,' *GJLP* 35 (30 Jan. 1954), 779.

²⁰⁷ F. W. Lawe, 'Pride of Profession,' *Stores* 38 (Oct. 1956), 57-60.

²⁰⁸ 'Distribution Growth Spurs Distributive Education,' *Stores* 40 (Feb. 1958), 90-92.

²⁰⁹ 'Distributive Education: A Promise for the Future,' *For-ward* 11 (Aug. 1966), 6-7. 'Co-ops Students Organize New National Club to Promote Retailing,' *DSE* 10 (Aug. 1947), 38-40. 'How Stores Benefit From Distributive Education,' *DSE* 10 (Oct. 1947), 40-41. Harry A. Applegate, 'Distributive Education Students—"They Really Love to Sell"', *Stores* 49 (Jan. 1967), 28-29. On the continued importance of distributive education to professionalising retail work into the 1970s, see 'Not the Last Refuge of the Unskilled,' *Stores* 51 (March 1969), 15-16.

If retail training did not necessarily begin upon employment, it certainly did not end there either. While the majority of training activities in department stores focused on new staff, professionalisation required employees to refine and reinforce their knowledge of the distributive trades continually. Consequently, retail trade organisations promoted their own schools and certification schemes among employees as an opportunity to acquire skills and qualifications that would make them eligible for promotion to higher positions and better wages in the retail hierarchy. The first trade school was started by Lucinda Wyman Prince in Boston in 1906, setting the precedent for further development of higher retail education in the US in the 1920s and again in the post-war years.²¹⁰ Department store retailers capitalised on university training programmes by creating in-store training programmes specifically for executives to promote continual personal development.²¹¹ In trade journals managers routinely assured their employees that it was through such education and development that individuals could find the satisfaction of a career in retail.²¹²

While university retail training programmes continued to expand in America, British department stores and retail trade organizations were working to initiate similar programmes in the UK. The most notable event in the British trade was initiation of the National Retail Distribution Certificate scheme in 1950. The NRDC programme offered entry-level shopworkers the opportunity to take classes in merchandising, sales, advertising and management as well as English and other general subjects over the course of three years, in addition to part-time work in a store. This programme was explicitly meant to foster a sense of professionalism and careerism in the retail trade to abate problems with recruitment and labour turnover. As Sir Richard Burbidge of Harrods argued in 1951, ‘Young people should see in [the NRDC] a gateway to the future which

²¹⁰ Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 151-153. Donald K. Beckley, ‘The Prince School of Retailing Looks Ahead,’ *Stores* 29 (Jan. 1947) 23-25. ‘Total Education in Retailing,’ *Stores* 38 (Sept. 1956), 39-40, 52.

²¹¹ Anne McNamara, (Ed.), *Recruiting and Developing Store Executives* (New York: Personnel Group, NRMA, 1967), 55-64. NRMA, *Developing Store Executives: A Study of the Practices of Stores in Training College Graduates for Executive Positions and Continued Training of Junior and Senior Executives* (New York: NRMA, 1960). Stephen K. Small, ‘Training and Development Programs for Young Executives,’ *Stores* 39 (October 1957), 67-70. ‘Begin Program for Personnel Development,’ *For-ward* 2 (January 1958), 1, 8.

²¹² For example, ‘Retailing. . . A Career With A Future!’ *PD* 19 (September 1953), 4-5.

could turn an ordinary job into an exciting opportunity.’²¹³ The NRDC programme was a subject of admiration among American dry goods retailers who sought to create similar, standardised national certificate programmes for entry-level retail employees in the 1950s.²¹⁴

For those less able to devote three years to further education in retailing in Britain, many other programmes were available. The Drapers Chamber of Trade offered scholarships to annual summer schools at Oxford for the best of the shop floor labour force in each store.²¹⁵ The John Lewis Partnership went so far as to set up its own college in 1946 to further the education of its partners in general and retail-specific subjects.²¹⁶ Many other department stores settled for subsidising evening coursework undertaken by employees in adult education programmes.

Training programmes inducted new employees into the traditions and ethos of the store of their employment, delineating (and sometimes enacting) the history and politics of the store, the rules and policies of employment, and the hierarchy of supervision and authority that enabled store operations to function smoothly. As with staff magazines, training also provided employers with the opportunity to inculcate ideological agendas, emphasising the shopworker’s place and importance in a broader national context. For example, in a 1948 book intended to introduce new or potential American employees to the retail job, retail educators Donald Beckley and William Logan argued:

The only economic and social justification for the existence of stores is service to the public, and the salesperson is in a key position to serve a highly useful function. The salesperson who properly accepts his social responsibility as a useful worker will see his job as a means of playing a small but important part in attaining the goal of a

²¹³ Quote from ‘Sir Richard Presents Prizes,’ *HG* 36 (December 1951), 363-365. For more on the NRDC programme, chaired by Harrods’ F. W. Lawe, see ‘The National Retail Distribution Certificate,’ *HG* 35 (June 1950), 134; ‘National Certificate Scheme Launched,’ *DR* (29 April 1950), 19, 22-23; ‘Three-Year Course Syllabus for the National Retail Distribution Certificate,’ *HG* 35 (July 1950), 171; ‘Encouraging Growth in N.R.D.C.,’ *HG* 39 (October 1954), 360. For employee responses to the NRDC, see ‘Junior Harrodians and the National Retail Distribution Certificate,’ *HG* 35 (August 1950), 204-205. On the limitations in demand for the NRDC by shopworkers, see T. W. Cynog-Jones, ‘Education for the Retail Trades,’ *ND* 4 (23 December 1950), 787-788.

²¹⁴ Stanley C. Hollander, ‘Retail Training and Certification—The British Experiment and American Analogies,’ *JR* 33 (Summer 1957), 69-78.

²¹⁵ ‘DCT Summer School: Importance of Better Selling Emphasised,’ *DR* (19 July 1952), 12-13. Reviews of each year’s school can be found in staff magazines; for example, ‘The Harrods Family Group at Oxford 1948,’ *HG* 33 (September 1948), 116.

²¹⁶ Lewis, *Partnership For All*, 132-146.

satisfactory living for all. The extent to which retail salespeople conscientiously perform their function as advisers to the consumer will determine in a large degree how soon and under what conditions this goal can be reached.²¹⁷

Here, shopworkers' *functional* and *ideological loyalties* converged; if American retail employees could be made to see that their stores and their work were a crucial factor in America's success as a democratic consumer society, perhaps they would take their work that much more seriously. In Britain, Co-operative retail societies also depended heavily on their training programmes to educate employees in the history, values and political agendas of the Co-operative movement, in order that they might better serve the movement and its consumer members.²¹⁸

On the whole, the major purpose of British and American programmes of recruitment and training was to make shop work more skilled and professional in response to employees' expressed desires for improved job status, and in response to customer complaints about service and salesmanship.²¹⁹ Training activities and further education in retail also accustomed shopworkers to the structures of retail employment, imparting the skills on which future job advancement would be built. Improvements in recruitment and training synthesized well then, with a growing emphasis on opportunity and advancement in department and variety stores. While the emphasis fell more heavily on training in department stores and on promotion in variety stores, there were elements of both in each, and the underlying goals were the same: to improve salesmanship, customer relations and productivity by heightening the ambitions, loyalties and professional self-image of shop floor employees.

Promotion

Programmes of job advancement were crucial to the professionalisation of shop work in the early post-war years. In order for shopworkers to invest themselves in a trade with relatively low starting wages, they would have to believe that

²¹⁷ Beckley and Logan, *The Retail Salesperson At Work*, 149. On Marshall Field's President James L. Palmer's contribution to the politicisation of retail career guidebooks, see 'The American Idea,' *FG*, 30 (Feb. 4, 1963), 2.

²¹⁸ Leonard, *New Methods*, 9-10.

²¹⁹ On using training programmes to make service more palatable to employees, see 'New Standards for Employee Training Needed,' *DSE* 10 (August 1947), 108-110.

advancement was not only possible but probable. Retailers' efforts to convince potential and extant employees of the advancement possible in retail employment were both rhetorical and practical. On the rhetorical front, columns in staff magazines for both department and variety stores continually reminded employees of stores' promotion-from-within policies. Pictures of recently 'promoted',²²⁰ employees were coupled with advice to others on the means for securing higher positions. Columns by upper-level managers described their humble beginnings as stock boys or salesmen, and their slow but sure road to the top. Staff magazine readers were also frequently reminded of the high percentage of managerial positions relative to entry-level positions in retail, encouraging employees to believe that in stores, 'there was a better chance of the recruit realizing his ultimate ambition'.²²¹

Store managers' rhetorical interpretations of the meanings and potentials of promotion for employees were coupled with real practical changes in post-war systems of promotion in stores. Over the course of the post-war period, department stores introduced new degrees of authority into the hierarchy of store work to help improve employee investment in job advancement through adherence to the store's policies and procedures. For example, some stores inserted the 'sponsor' role into the traditional progression from salesperson to assistant buyer, granting the sponsor more authority over new recruits, but less authority than that assumed by the assistant buyer.²²² Other stores initiated cross-training programmes that would allow salespeople and other shop floor workers to be more easily promoted from one department to another.²²³ These programmes meant that a single promotion could trickle down the retail hierarchy, setting off a 'chain reaction of advancement', while offering 'opportunity insurance' to those

²²⁰ 'Promotion' included moves to the same position in other departments or to the same departments in other stores, which was perhaps not so much promotion as rotation.

²²¹ Quote from 'Sir Richard Presents,' 363. 'Sir Richard and the Staff,' *HG* 38 (April 1953), 1. 'Editorial,' *In Company* 3 (Autumn 1961), 1. HF1/8/1/1/4, UGA. 'Congratulations to Fifteen Associates on Promotion to Bigger Responsibilities,' *SC* 35 (August-September 1953), 4-5. 'Some Promotions and Appointments' column, *HG*, for example 41 (August 1956), 403. *Your Job at Penney's*, 22-23, 1940s folder, 'Associates Training Materials, 1920s-1960s' Box, JCPA. On the ratio of executives to entry-level staff in American department stores, see NRMA, *Developing Store Executives*, 5-10.

²²² *Careers in Retail Selling*, 16, 21-23. Marshall Field's, 'The Sponsor's Job.'

²²³ Lombard, *Behavior In A Selling Group*, 131. 'Help Shortage Is What You Make It!' *DSE* 6 (Oct. 1943), 64, 80. *Working With Harrods*, 1949, 6, HCA. On non-selling cross-training, see 'Making Clerical Work Easier,' *DSE* 8 (June 1945), 90-92.

willing to invest themselves in retail work.²²⁴ Additionally, some American department stores, including Strawbridge & Clothiers in Philadelphia, implemented 'executive training' programmes that redefined all managerial positions from buyerships up as 'executive' and offered those who took such courses hope that they could be promoted to better positions with their newly acquired skills.²²⁵

A major challenge in selling promotion programmes as career potential to potentially loyal employees was that such programmes had to be proven effective. This was particularly difficult in those stores where directorships remained hereditary: Sir Hugh Fraser directed the House of Fraser group in the UK until 1966 when his son took over, the Burbidge family directed the London-based Harrods group until they were taken over by the House of Fraser in 1959, John Lewis continued as director of the John Lewis Partnership until 1955, and the Strawbridge and Clothier families still held the majority of positions on the Philadelphia store's board of directors in the 1960s. Given the hereditary basis of advancement at the very top of these stores, managers were keen to make advancement in the lower ranks seem more democratic and merit-based. Such change was made possible in the US from the late 1940s, and later in Britain, with the development of various measures of workplace productivity and the implementation of periodic reviews for each employee by Personnel Department staff. These changes made promotion and remuneration contingent on measurable workplace performance.²²⁶ The John Lewis Partnership even kept a 'Promotion List' of employees eligible for promotion in attempts to standardise promotion

²²⁴ 'Penney Paths Lead "Up"', *PN* 22 (July 1956), 2, 11. 'At Penney's, the Suction is UP!', *PN* 23 (Aug. 1957), 2. 'Opportunities in "Chain Reaction" for 103,' *PN* 23 (July 1957), 1.

²²⁵ 'Mr. Strawbridge Opens Executive Training Program,' *SC* 35 (Nov. 1953), 5. 'Store-Wide Upgrading System Applies to All Miller & Rhoads Employees,' *BNRDGA* 27 (Dec. 1945), 25, 28. On the values privileged by 'executive training' programmes, see Robert N. McMurry, 'Executive Trainees: How Can They Best Be Selected?' *DSE* 13 (March 1950), 20, 32.

²²⁶ 'Open Door to Advancement Builds Organization Strength,' *DSE* 4 (10 September 1941), 2, 34. Gordon G. Bowen, 'Organized Salary Administration: New Competitive Weapon for Department Stores,' *DSE* 8 (August 1945), 22, 42-44. William R. Spiegel and Elizabeth Lanham, 'Job Evaluation in Department Stores,' *JR* 27 (Summer 1951), 79-85. Norris B. Brisco, 'Job Evaluation,' *JR* 21 (Oct. 1945), 97-98. John H. Kostmayer, 'Performance Rating's Role in Salary Administration,' *DSE* 10 (Sept. 1947), 40, 42. John H. Kostmayer, 'Job Evaluation: Calculating Wage Rates,' *DSE* 10 (Nov. 1947), 110-112. Samuel T. Beacham, 'Job Evaluation: The Key to Effective Salary Control,' *Stores* 41 (Dec. 1959), 38, 40-42.

procedures.²²⁷ In principle, these analyses provided a more systematised basis for future promotion.

The post-war emphasis on opportunities for promotion in retail was made possible by the increase in available managerial jobs through the construction of new stores and the professionalisation of retail managerial structures. The opportunity for job advancement was arguably strongest in the American variety and junior department store chains expanding in the post-war years. For 1959 alone, Montgomery Wards announced the creation of 3280 new jobs nation-wide, 553 of which were major managerial positions.²²⁸ At JC Penney's, the commitment to promotion-from-within, coupled with dynamic expansion of the chain gave it the reputation of a business where male employees could rapidly work their way up from the stockroom to the store manager's office.²²⁹ (See Figure 3.10.) Even traditional American department stores such as Marshall Field and Strawbridge and Clothier opened up new outlets for promotional ambition among downtown staff with the construction of suburban branch stores.²³⁰

Programmes of professionalisation and promotion in British and American department stores were part of a broad new style of labour management evolving in response to the needs of larger, multi-branch retail organisations that had abolished or diminished family ownership and control in the post-war years. The increasing distance between shop floor employees and company managers in these stores undermined the efficacy of traditional paternalist systems of labour management from the 1930s onward. New managerial styles promised to resolve the labour problems caused by the failures of paternalism by improving shopworkers' emotional investment in their jobs, deepening their loyalties to retail as a career, and simultaneously increasing production through direct correlations between individual efficiency and job advancement. New programmes of professionalisation and promotion had other labour relations benefits as well. Just

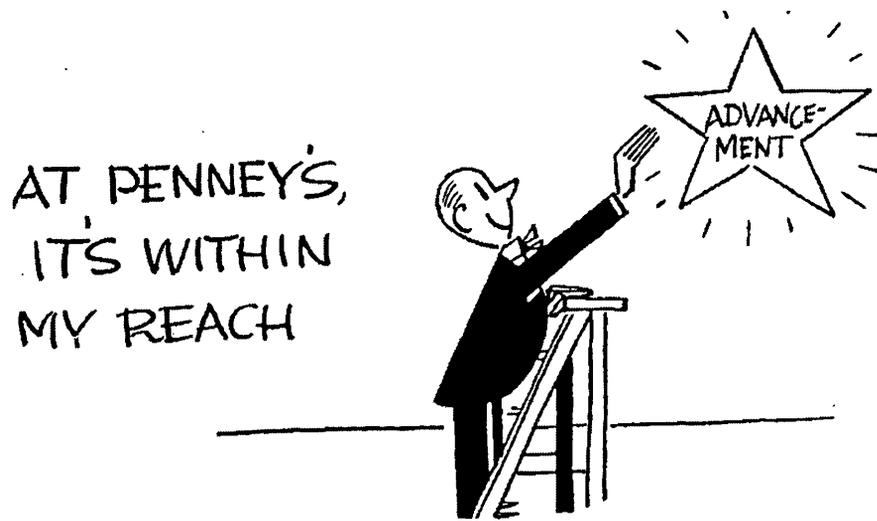
²²⁷ 'Promotion in the Partnership,' *GJLP* 34 (13 December 1952), 634-635. 'Promotion,' *GJLP* 42 (10 September 1960), 755.

²²⁸ 'Can You See Yourself in This Picture,' *For-ward* 3 (September 1958), 5.

²²⁹ N. W. Comish and Galen Stutsman, 'What Makes the J. C. Penney Company Tick?' *JR* 32 (Summer 1956), 90-94, 103. Lawrence Galton, 'Those Amazing Penney Stores,' *Daily News Post* (29 August, 1956), 8, clipping 0-56-31, JCPA.

²³⁰ 'An Invitation to Our Store Family,' *SC* 34 (Feb. 1952), 1. 'Onwards and Upwards to the New Wilmington Store,' *SC* 34 (Aug. 1952), 4. 'Plan Larger Suburban Store for Seattle,' *FG* 22 (14 Feb. 1955), 1. 'New Old Orchard Store Will Open October 22nd,' *FG* 24 (8 Oct. 1956), 1. 'Flag-Raising Ceremony Opens Field's New Store at Mayfair,' *FG* 26 (12 Jan. 1959), 1.

Figure 3.10. 'Opportunity insurance'



Note that only male employees could get on the ladder or escalator to higher managerial positions in JC Penney stores at mid-century. This was true of many other chain retail stores at the time as well.

Penny News 22 (July 1956), 2.

as paternalism had served in part as a discreet form of anti-unionism, so revised store promotions policies encouraged individual shopworkers to pursue their own personal and material advancement through the hierarchy of in-store opportunities, instead of ensuring it through collective bargaining or political organisation for better wage policies.²³¹

* * *

It is difficult to be certain just how shopworkers received programmes of professionalisation and promotion. In part, this is simply a factor of the sheer diversity of the retail labour market, which included women and men, part-time and full-time employees, skilled and unskilled workers, and people of all ages, who might have responded differently to changes in retail labour management based on personal difference alone. The problem is further complicated by the fact that most archival sources documented the perspectives of employers and unions, with little direct expression of employee opinion. Given those limitations, it is still possible to posit some preliminary conclusions based on letters from shopworkers in the John Lewis Partnership *Gazette* and employee attitude surveys. Two major interrelated factors affecting employees' reception of programmes of professionalisation and promotion were the simultaneous rationalisation of shop work outlined in Chapter One, and the differential impact of promotion programmes by gender.

It is not historical coincidence that British and American department and variety stores simultaneously developed programmes of rationalisation, professionalisation and promotion in response to the pressures of mass retailing and sectoral restructuring in the post-war years. After all, the final goal of each of these programmes was to improve shop floor productivity—whether directly through the introduction of new machinery and standardised selling techniques, or indirectly through improved employee morale and decreased labour turnover. In many ways programmes of rationalisation and professionalisation complemented each other. For example, the cross-training used to facilitate newly rationalised work procedures and job rotation provided lower-level employees with the skills and knowledge they needed to be 'promoted' to similar positions in other

²³¹ On paternalism as anti-unionism, see Gerald Zahavi, *Workers, Managers, and Welfare Capitalism: The Shoeworkers and Tanners of Endicott Johnson, 1890-1950*. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), esp. 153-161. Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism*.

departments or other branches of the same company.²³² Programmes of job classification also facilitated both rationalisation and professionalisation by defining the standards by which an individual position could be surveilled for higher productivity while simultaneously helping to place employees in the jobs most suited to their skills and preferences.²³³ And where attention to human relations and professionalisation did not interfere with rationalisation, accommodations could be made to raise employee morale. (See Figures 3.11 and 3.12.)

While rationalisation supplemented professionalisation nicely in some ways, in general it undermined retailers' efforts to professionalise the trade by exacerbating employees' sense of job insecurity, and by generating resentment among shop floor workers.²³⁴ Some methods of rationalisation generated little documented resistance from employees, such as the transition to self-service, the widespread use of cash registers from the 1940s, and the implementation of new computer systems in American stores from the 1960s that tracked sales from the cash register to the accounting office, regulating intentional and unintentional errors on the part of both sales and clerical workers.²³⁵ However, inevitably some retail employees argued that the changes being made to improve productivity only increased the burden of labour for loyal, full-time, long-term employees without improving customer service.²³⁶ Such concerns were justified by the fact that retailers explicitly acknowledged that new technologies and work processes were

²³² For more on cross-training for more efficient use of staff, see 'Reviewing a Business to Meet Higher Labour Costs,' *DR* (9 May 1953), 25-26. 'How to Raise Productivity,' 16-17.

²³³ 'Store-Wide Upgrading System Applies to All Miller & Rhoads Employees,' *BNRDGA* 27 (Dec. 1945), 25, 28. For more on job classification and job assignment through employment testing, see 'Your Annual Confidential Report,' *GJLP* 39 (11 January 1958), 1127-1128. 'Employment Turnover Drops From 10% to 2%,' *DSE* 8 (Jan. 1945), 38-39. 'Retail Employment Testing,' *DSE* 9 (Oct. 1946), 164-166. 'Personnel Selection Mechanized,' *DSE* 10 (Sept. 1947), 82-83. 'Testing the Human Race,' 127, 130. 'Means and Ends in Job Evaluation,' *BNRDGA* 28 (April 1946), 28, 50. Morris Guberman, 'Better Sales People Can Be Selected,' *Stores* 37 (July 1955), 43-47, 58. Leonard, *New Methods*, 5.

²³⁴ On tensions between rationalisation and new welfare managerial styles in the first decades of the 20th century, see Daniel Nelson and Stuart Campbell, 'Taylorism Versus Welfare Work in American Industry: H. L. Gantt and the Bancrofts,' *Business History Review* 46 (Spring 1972), 1-16.

²³⁵ S. D. Astor, 'Control—Key to Profit,' *JR* 36 (Fall 1960), 138-142. C. Robert McBrier, 'Progress Report on EDP in Retailing,' *Stores* 42 (May 1960), 63-64. Kenneth R. Lavery, 'How Computer Systems Will Work for Tomorrow's Retail Management,' *Stores* 44 (December 1962), 15-17. 'Sales Data from a Tape-Punch Cash Register,' *Stores* 45 (June 1963), 19-20. 'Retail Mechanization,' *For-ward* 10 (September 1965), 1-4.

²³⁶ 'Productivity,' *GJLP* 37 (6 August 1955), 679-80. James Suffridge, 'Salespeople: The Non-Vanishing Americans,' *RCA* 56 (October 1953), 2-4.

Figure 3.11. Robert Simpson Co. operators, 1941



Management and Personnel Proceedings 1941, vol. 2 (New York: NRDGA, 1941), 28. Baker Library.

Figure 3.12. Kaufmann's operators, 1961



PROPER PERSONNEL, THOROUGH TRAINING
AND MODERN EQUIPMENT AID TELEPHONE
SALES FOR KAUFMANN'S, PITTSBURGH, PA.

Stores 43 (Jan. 1961), 8.

In the telephone room above, working conditions were industrial in nature, with little privacy, easy surveillance and supervisors standing at hand. By the 1960s, some stores, like Kaufmann's department store, had realised the potential improvement in employee morale encouraged by altered workplace layout. Although still standardised, each operator has more space and privacy in which to work.

meant to help fewer people perform the same amount of work. For example, *Women's Wear Daily* reported in 1947 that 'approximately 700 proposals for job simplification have accounted for a saving of more than 470,000 man hours thus far at Marshall Field.'²³⁷ (See Figure 3.13.)

For the most part, however, shopworkers' frustrations appear not to have stemmed directly from their employers' efforts to improve productivity but from the surveillance implicit in those methods. Shopworkers' resistance to the power relations of surveillance were clearest in response to undercover 'shoppers' employed by stores to rate salespeople's interpersonal and selling skills. From at least the inter-war years, many department and variety stores in both Britain and America employed 'shoppers' unknown to their salespeople, who would make their rounds through the store, privately rating salespeople on everything from attractiveness to merchandise knowledge.²³⁸ (See Figure 3.3 above.) Those who employed the better-selling skills detailed in training programmes received store vouchers or small sums of money from 'shoppers', while those who failed to employ such skills received slips alerting them that they had been 'shopped', and that their sales technique or interpersonal skills had proven less than adequate.²³⁹ While retailers relied on their undercover agents to measure the implementation of better selling techniques on the sales floor, many salespeople considered such techniques 'snooping' on the part of management. As one John Lewis partner argued in 1952, 'It is a pity that the Partnership wastes so much money paying these wretched people to shop the already overworked selling assistants who find it hard enough indeed to practically force the customers to spend money.'²⁴⁰

In America the use of 'shoppers' to rate salespeople's performance was only the tip of the iceberg. In the early 1950s the Retail Clerks International Association (RCIA) decried the growing use of personality tests in American business as 'a humiliating new kind of tyranny' that undermined the 'good old way of judging a man by his performance on the job'.²⁴¹ The most intrusive forms of personal and physical surveillance were those intended to cut down on

²³⁷ 'Industry Methods Cut Store Costs,' *Women's Wear Daily* (16 June 1947).

²³⁸ Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 158-159, 262-263. Whitehead, 'National Survey,' 3-11. 'Drive to Improve Salesmanship,' *DR* (24 May 1952), 12.

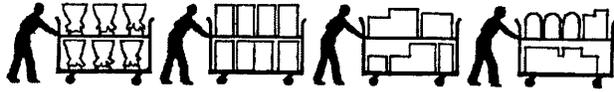
²³⁹ 'What Happened to Suggestion Selling?', *PN* 24 (Sept. 1958), 1, 4. 'Point of No Sale,' *Fortune*, (July 1952), 81-82.

²⁴⁰ 'Letter to the Editor,' *GJLP* 34 (21 June 1952), 261. 'Shopping Tests,' *GJLP* 31 (30 April 1949), 150; 31 (11 June 1949), 231; 31 (17 September 1949), 399.

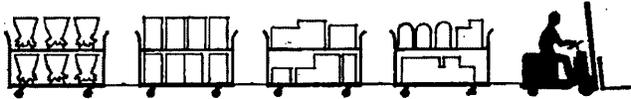
Figure 3.13. Backroom labour savings

Cut Handling Costs

by replacing OBSOLETE METHODS



with MODERN HANDLING METHODS

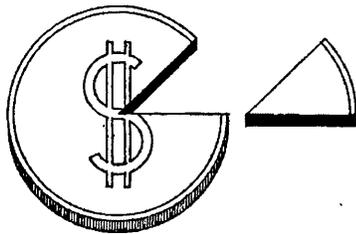


IN YOUR WAREHOUSE

FOR ONE STORE WE SHOWED A SAVING OF



LABOR
39 MEN



COSTS
\$82,400.00
ANNUALLY

May we apply our experience
toward helping you with a
similar problem?

ABBOTT, MERKT AND COMPANY

designers of department store structures

10 east 40th st., New York 16, N. Y.

Stores 33 (March 1951), 9.

employee embezzlement. In order to prevent pilferage, some stores searched all staff as they departed through the staff entrance each day.²⁴² The same Willmark Service System ‘shoppers’ who rated shop floor salesmanship also helped employers to watch out for sly salespeople at the cash register. (See Figure 3.14.) In the mid-1960s the RCIA continually protested against retail employers’ use of polygraph tests as part of the employment procedure and as a method of anti-unionism. Still, even in 1977, over 18 per cent of America’s largest department stores reported using polygraph tests for selection of full-time, entry-level employees.²⁴³ At times surveillance for the purpose of anti-unionism crossed the boundaries of legality, as was discovered by the McClellan Committee hearings of 1957, which uncovered the use of industrial spies and other union-busting methods at Sears.²⁴⁴ The resentment expressed by shopworkers and their unions regarding undercover ‘shoppers’ and other methods of industrial surveillance generally focused less on the fact that managers were trying to improve sales productivity, than on shopworkers’ feelings of betrayal. If the whole premise of professionalisation was to improve department store employees’ self-image and social status, the surveillance implicit in many methods of job analysis only undermined the mutual trust and respect that were so important to fostering employee loyalties.

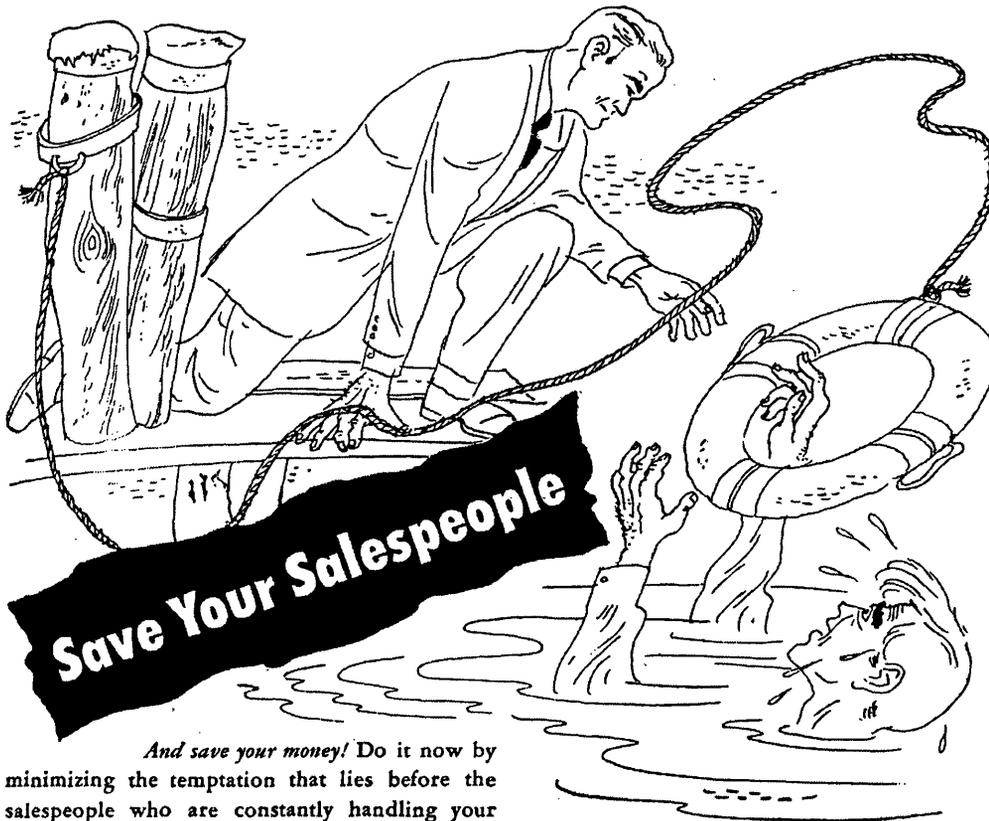
The tensions between programmes of rationalisation and professionalisation were at their highest when department store managers hired ‘experts’ from outside their companies to improve production and help rationalise shop work instead of promoting their own skilled employees to such envied managerial positions. In 1955, one John Lewis Partnership employee blamed the company’s troublesome managerial hiring programme for the business’s failure to bring productivity to the desired levels. After expressing dismay at the

²⁴¹ ‘In a Manner of Speaking,’ *RCA* 57 (Oct. 1954), 15.

²⁴² ‘Searching Employees: The Position Explained,’ *DR* (11 April 1953), 22. On surveillance to prevent employee embezzlement and shoplifting, Norman Jaspán, ‘Wholesale Theft . . . At the Retail Level,’ *Stores* 46 (Nov. 1964), 33-35.

²⁴³ ‘Lie Detector Tests Are a Blight on Retailing,’ *RCA* 65 (October 1962), 6. ‘Scientists Condemn Lie Detectors as Inaccurate, Immoral,’ *RCA* 66 (February 1963), 11. ‘NLRB Hits Use of Lie Detectors For Union Busting,’ *RCA* 68 (February 1965), 12. On the use of polygraph tests in retail, see C. Glenn Walters and Bruce Gunn, ‘Appraising Retailers’ Use of the Polygraph,’ *JR* 43 (Winter 1968), 10-21; Myron Gable and Charles Hollon, *Personnel Practices of the Retail Industry* (New York: NRMA, 1977), 25.

Figure 3.14. Shop floor surveillance



And save your money! Do it now by minimizing the temptation that lies before the salespeople who are constantly handling your cash. It's simple when you set up moral barriers against great temptation by instilling a greater feeling of risk.

Today, one of the big temptations faced by many men and women is the one that accompanies the handling of other's money.

Willmark Service System, with its nation-wide staff of permanently employed bonded analysts, will set up these moral barriers by testing your salespeople.

Willmark's educational material, store signs, and point-of-sale fact-finding service can minimize your losses due to irregularities in cash handling. Establish in your store, now, **THE POWER OF PREVENTION** that will keep your salespeople from succumbing to the human weakness of temptation.

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appointment of an outsider to a key managerial position, the anonymous Partner argued, 'If the people who have to get the job done were given a little more say in the doing of it, and the words "Nonsense" and "Bosh" used a little less often to people who really know what they are talking about, some real progress would be made.'²⁴⁵ Similar anger was repeatedly voiced by other Partners whenever the company circumvented its promise of 'promotion from within' by hiring university-educated professional managers instead of promoting experienced employees.²⁴⁶ Employees' concerns about the limits of promotion in retail were not unique to the Partnership, but represented broader concerns in the retail labour market.²⁴⁷ Programmes of professionalisation and promotion were undermined then, when concerns about productivity took precedence.

The basic underlying tension between programmes of rationalisation and professionalisation in post-war department and variety stores was further complicated by issues of gender in a trade dominated by female employment. Gender was a significant, if not always explicit, factor in programmes of retail promotion. Promotion from stock keeper to salesperson to buyer had long been a possibility in many department stores regardless of gender. Retail promotion scales were further liberalised during the war when women moved into jobs traditionally held by men. These jobs included window display, section manager positions, delivery work, sales in men's departments, elevator operator positions, and electrical work as well as managerial positions.²⁴⁸

Still, in the post-war years, the ranks of higher management in department stores remained largely closed to women. In 1952 John Spedan Lewis openly stated his bias against promoting women to even lower-level buyer positions in

²⁴⁴ Jacoby, *Modern Manors*, 130-140. For the RWDSU's perspective on industrial espionage in Famous-Barr department stores, see 'Gestapo Web of Espionage Bared at Board Hearings,' *RWDSE* 6 (1 May 1943), 5, 30.

²⁴⁵ 'Productivity,' 679-80.

²⁴⁶ 'Recruitment to Senior Posts,' *GJLP* 31 (30 April 1949), 149-150. 'Promotions,' *GJLP* 32 (15 July 1950), 279. 'The Partnership's Integrity,' *GJLP* 33 (6 October 1951), 458-459. 'Time to Take Stock of Personnel,' *GJLP* 34 (13 December 1952), 639-640.

²⁴⁷ 'Wither the Young Executive?: Staff Uneasy Over Promotion Schemes,' *DR* (14 February 1953, 19).

²⁴⁸ 'Stores Shopping the Labor Markets,' *DSE* 5 (Nov. 1942), 46. John W. Wingate, 'Wartime Personnel Problems in Department Stores,' *JR* 19 (Feb. 1943), 2-9, 17. Karl Gerstenberg and T. Dart Ellsworth, 'Who Wears the Pants in Department and Specialty Stores?' *JR* 25 (Fall 1949), 97-103, 123.

the Partnership for fear that they might marry.²⁴⁹ Meanwhile, store manager positions in chain stores like JC Penney's and Woolworth's remained exclusively male until the 1970s.²⁵⁰ (See Figure 3.15.) By 1967 women constituted 75 per cent of staff but filled less than 40 per cent of managerial positions in British department and variety stores with more than 100 employees.²⁵¹ Consequently, the advancement programmes described above had different meanings for men and women. On the one hand, the fact that women *could* advance to lower and even mid-level managerial positions in store sales, personnel, training and catering departments, set retail apart from most of their industrial counterparts of the time.²⁵² On the other hand, job promotions potential seems more likely to have attracted the loyalties of male employees who were more likely than women to advance to higher managerial positions and better pay.

When viewed through the lens of gender distinction it is unsurprising that professionalisation and job promotions programmes in department stores from the inter-war years through the 1960s did little to abate the high labour turnover rates and recruitment problems in the female-dominated sales positions that mattered most for maintaining customer loyalties and overall productivity. Labour turnover remained highest in female-dominated selling departments, underpinning the discontent of American and British merchants who fretted that their investment in salesmanship training programmes and new managerial styles reaped lower than necessary returns because of high shop floor labour turnover.²⁵³

High turnover of female retail employees was in large part a result of external factors relevant to British and American women's life cycles. Department store staff magazines were full of news of female employees leaving employment as a result of marriage or pregnancy.²⁵⁴ However, this 'natural' attrition was only exacerbated by the fact that with less access to higher positions

²⁴⁹ 'Recruitment of the Buying Side,' *GJLP* 34 (23 August 1952), 388. 'What Do The Ladies Say?: "Buyers, Where Possible, Should Be Men",' *DR* (30 August 1952), 19.

²⁵⁰ Plunkett-Powell, *Remembering Woolworth's*, 217. 'JCPenney and Women,' Company Archive Notes, JCPA. On the position of women in American retail management, see Donald K. Beckley, 'Too Many Women in Retailing?' *Stores* 37 (March 1955), 21, 65.

²⁵¹ 'Occupations in Retail Distribution: Great Britain, May 1967,' *Ministry of Labour Gazette* (December 1967), 963-970.

²⁵² Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 163-164.

²⁵³ 'Staff Turnover Figures Slightly Better,' *GJLP* 48 (16 July 1966), 614-617. 'Staff Turnover,' *GJLP* 49 (21 October 1967), 937. 'Staff Turnover Figures in Department Stores,' *DR* (4 April 1953), 9, 12.

²⁵⁴ See the employee news sections of the *Harroldian Gazette*, *Store Chat*, and *Field Glass*.

Figure 3.15. Gender subversion or show?

Fair Sex Takes over at Penney's



COLUMBUS, O.—Wearing personalized name aprons and lapel corsages, salesmen at this store did an about face recently and turned the duties of management over to the fair sex. "Manager I. A. Swenson was attending a convention at Cincinnati," said associate Nancy Mock, "so the women took over for two days. The men paraded down High Street in their aprons before the store opened and attracted a big crowd. Response was terrific . . . the first day we had a 200% gain over the same day last year." Picture above, showing Penney's all-male salesforce, appeared in Columbus Dispatch.

In this Columbus, Ohio JC Penney store, women took over managerial work for two days while the store manager was away at convention. Male employees took over the saleswomen's jobs and marched down High Street in their aprons before the store opened. This temporary gender subversion proved a good sales promotion, with sales up 200 per cent during the event. However, such activities did little to change the real promotion opportunities for women in stores.

Pay Day 16 (Oct. 1951), 8.

the self-manipulation intrinsic to retail emotional labour, or reluctance by managers and executives to allow more power-sharing in important decision-making processes, wages came back to the forefront.

In America, there existed over the course of the post-war period a particularly glaring incongruity between the supposed personal and national benefits of selling as a career, and the material benefits as measured in hourly and weekly earnings. As one *Fortune* magazine columnist wrote of retail management in 1952:

In no other field of selling, accordingly, is the contrast between precept and practice so glaring: despite the phrases so habitual to retailers ('Salespeople are our front-line soldiers' . . . 'lifeblood of the store' . . . 'the bread and butter of our business' etc., etc.), the fact is that retail management does not believe the salesperson has much of a function.²⁵⁸

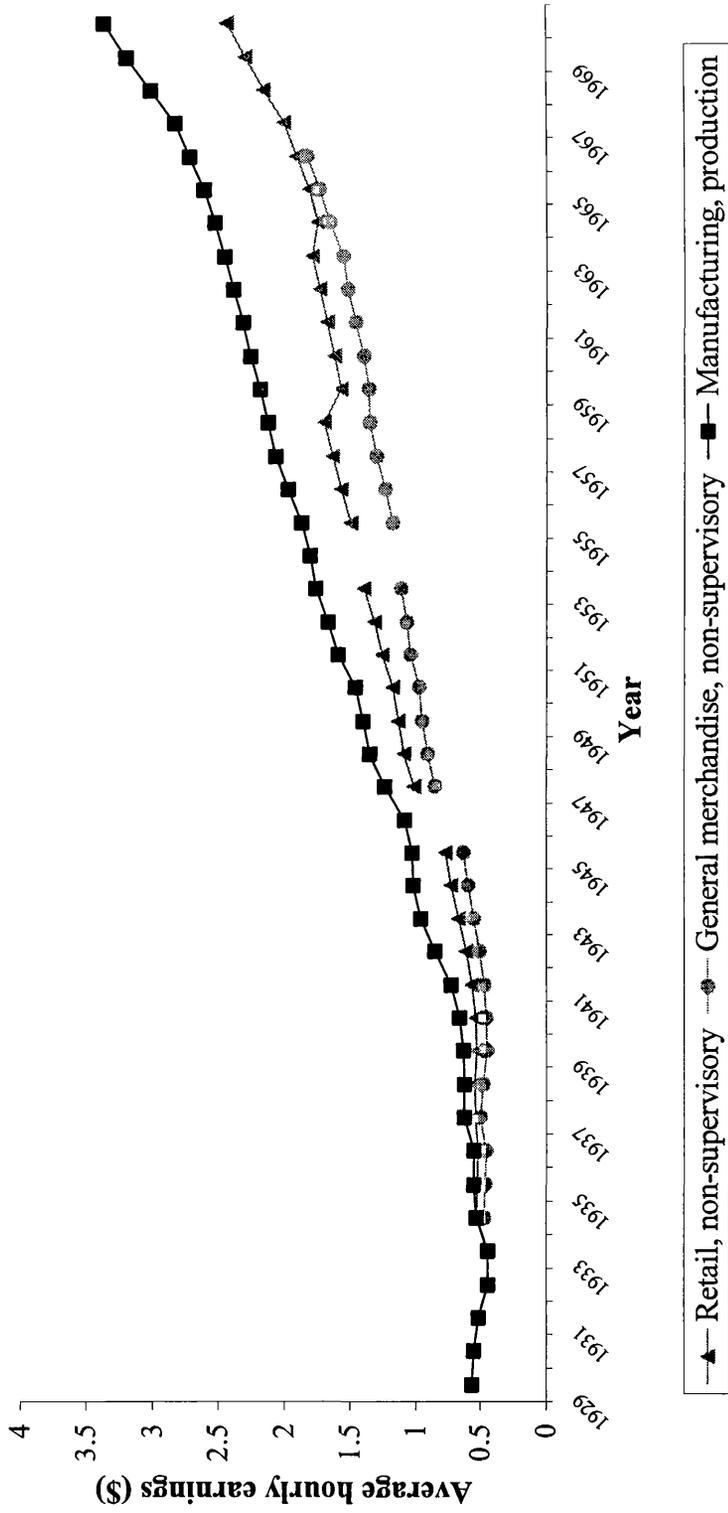
The columnist targeted low retail wages as a key marker of the discrepancy between rhetoric and practice in retail stores, comparing the wages of salespeople with those of manufacturing workers in 15 major cities. His results mirrored those of government statistics showing that over the course of the post-war period the wage gap between manufacturing and retail workers grew increasingly steep, with general merchandise (department and variety store) employees hardest hit. By 1965, non-managerial retail workers were receiving on average 62 per cent of the weekly earnings of their manufacturing counterparts, and only 69 per cent of the hourly wage received by manufacturing production workers.²⁵⁹ (See Figures 3.16 and 3.17.)

Wage statistics were not available in Britain until the late 1960s. Even then the retail statistics were not clear-cut, because they included both managerial and non-managerial employees whereas the manufacturing wage statistics covered only non-managerial staff. This undoubtedly led to inflated retail figures given the large number of managerial staff employed in stores. These figures showed that in department and variety stores in 1967, the average male adult retail

²⁵⁸ 'What's Wrong,' 77-80, 146-54.

²⁵⁹ For a more in-depth evaluation of the wage differences in retail according to region, type of trade, size of business, etc., see US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employee Earnings in Retail Trade in October 1956: Distribution of Nonsupervisory Employees By Average Earnings*, Bulletin 1220 (Washington, 1957); *Employee Earnings in Retail Trade, 1961*, Bulletin 1338 (Washington, 1962); *Employee Earnings in Retail Trade, June 1962*, Bulletin 1380 (Washington, 1963). Also, 'Earnings in Retail Trade, June 1961,' *Monthly Labor Review* (January 1963), 44-51.

Figure 3.16. Average hourly earnings of American manufacturing, retail, and general merchandise workers, 1929-1970

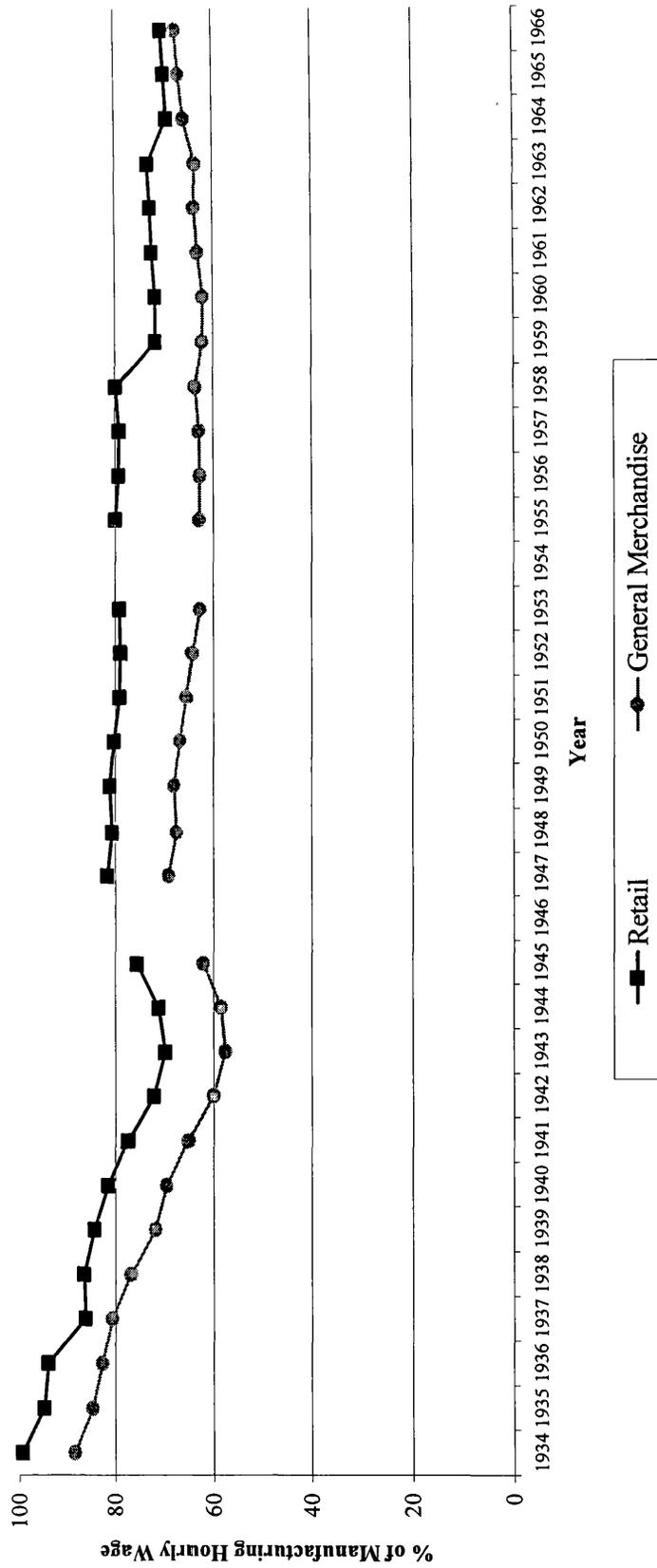


Source: *Monthly Labor Review, Statistical Abstract of the United States.*

*Industry series were adjusted in late 1958 and 1963 to fit new benchmark data, explaining the sharp drops in wage estimates in those years. Comparable data are not available for 1946 and 1954.

*General merchandise includes department and variety stores.

Figure 3.17. US retail and general merchandise hourly wages as percentage of manufacturing hourly wages, 1934-1967



Source: *Monthly Labor Review, Statistical Abstract of the United States.*

employee earned 103 per cent of the non-managerial male adult manufacturing hourly wage, while female adult retail employees earned 96 per cent of the hourly wage paid to non-managerial adult female employees in manufacturing.²⁶⁰ The only indication of direct comparisons between retail and industry for non-managerial employees came from USDAW's Assistant General Secretary, J. D. Hiscock, at the 1962 ADM where he estimated that retail wages dropped from 90 per cent of the industrial average in 1945 to 60 per cent of the industrial average in 1962.²⁶¹ If this was the case, then the growing difference between retail and manufacturing wages for non-managerial employees in post-war Britain directly mirrored the wage trends described above for post-war America.

Despite the growing gap between manufacturing and retail wages, and despite evidence that higher wages led to better salesmanship, the NRDGA, the Drapers' Chamber of Trade and other retail organisations in the US and Britain continually argued against the possibility of higher wages for their employees. Retailers' political resistance to higher minimum wages made clear their general resistance to raising the wages of their lowest-paid employees for fear it would cause a wave of requests for better remuneration all the way up the wage scale in stores. One of the main justifications for resistance to raising wages was that most shopworkers were female or part-time employees deserving of lower pay.²⁶² Resistance to any form of government intervention or regulation in retail also factored greatly in resistance to the measure, stemming from the principles of free market economics many retailers so fervently embraced.²⁶³

It is difficult to determine the extent to which British and American department and variety store employers succeeded in soliciting *ideological*

²⁶⁰ Based on manufacturing statistics from 'Earnings and Hours,' *Ministry of Labour Gazette* (Nov. 1967), 934-935; and retail statistics from 'Selling Staffs in Retail Distribution; Earnings and Hours,' *Ministry of Labour Gazette* (Dec. 1967), 970-972.

²⁶¹ 'Building Membership and Bargaining Strength,' *ND* 16 (7 July 1962), 448.

²⁶² E. R. Lerner, 'Substandard? A Discussion of Department Store Wages and Work Opportunities,' *BNRDGA* 30 (Sept. 1948), 18-21, 66-67.

²⁶³ Concerns about government regulations of retail wages were clear from the beginning of the Second World War when one *DSE* editorialist called efforts to raise retail wages or decrease working hours an 'Un-Americanism.' 'Action on this Wage-and-Hour Childishness,' *DSE* 5 (March 25, 1942), 30. On amending the Fair Labor Standards Act, see 'The Minimum Wage in Retailing,' *JR* 24 (Feb. 1948), 1-5; 'On Minimum Wages in Retailing—and Elsewhere,' *JR* 25 (Summer 1949), 54-55, 63; 'Federal Minimum Wages and the Retail Exemption,' *Stores* 37 (March 1955), 11-12. 'What the Retail Exemption Means to You,' *Stores* 39 (March 1957), 11-13. 'If FLSA Comes to Retailing,' *Stores* 43 (January 1961), 51-52, 54. For examples of British retail organisations' resistance to wage increases, see 'SRDA Council to Resist Wage Increase Claim,' *DR* (9 February 1952), 13-14. 'The Wage-Rate Dilemma,' *DR* (26 July 1952), 24.

loyalties from their employees. As long as retail wages and job status remained low in retail generally, proving the limitations of private enterprise to provide rewarding, remunerative work for all, it is unlikely that employees' full *ideological loyalties* were forthcoming. As one correspondent to the *Co-operative News*, expressing his concern about Co-operative wages, argued:

Men cannot live entirely on moral and spiritual incentives. Imagine saying to a £5 10s. per week employee, "Your incentive is to help build co-operative services and mutual aid, &c."

These things may be incentives to [advocate of 'moral incentive'] W. Hazell, but to money-worried men they are sheer mockery. Moral incentive will come when material wants are sufficient to give men and women a faith in something worth striving for.²⁶⁴

This correspondent's suggestion that *ideological loyalties* depended on the fulfilment of employees' instrumentalist demands is an important one, to which I will return in Chapters Five and Six.

Whether or not low wages and poor job status undermined employees' *ideological loyalties*, they certainly undermined some employees' *functional loyalties*. As the *Fortune* columnist noted, comparatively low wages offered shopworkers little incentive to invest in their stores or to work through the emotional labour good salesmanship demanded.²⁶⁵ Furthermore, as surveys of potential recruits continually demonstrated, the lower professional status of entry-level retail work and the lower wages present in the trade deterred development of *fundamental loyalties* among the skilled, university-educated, career-seeking workers retail managers so earnestly sought to recruit.²⁶⁶

Neglect of the wages and job status issue by managers and executives not only endangered employees' *fundamental, functional* and *ideological loyalties* to their employers. It also provided the basis on which British and American retail

²⁶⁴ 'Moral Incentives,' *CN* 4122 (3 June 1950), 14. Responding to W. Hazell, 'Incentive,' *CN* 4118 (6 May 1950), 8.

²⁶⁵ 'What's Wrong,' 78-80, 146, 148. See also, 'Retail Selling Can and Should Be Improved,' *JR* 33 (Spring 1957), 39-46, p. 40.

²⁶⁶ 'How Public Opinion Affects Retailing's Available Recruits,' *Stores* 40 (July-August 1958), 26-28. 'Are You Planning for Tomorrow's Executives,' *DSE* 17 (June 1954), 126-127, 135. 'Our Executive Shortage,' *Stores* 47 (January 1965), 30. 'Future Execs: Recruitment is Spotty and So Are Results—But Not Always,' *Stores* 49 (March 1967), 27-28. NRMA, *Finding and Keeping Executives* (New York: NRMA, 1960). 'Pay Comes First,' 47, 61-62. 'Pay's Not the Whole Story,' 44-45. 'Our Girl, Martha,' *JR* 23 (October 1947), 77-80. 'Why Do College Graduates Leave Retailing?' *JR* 31 (Winter 1955-1956), 157-65, esp. 161. The conclusions of the latter were picked up by the RCIA to support their bargaining demands, 'Study Shows Causes of Personnel Turnover,' *RCA* 59 (April 1956), 17.

trade unions could build their campaigns to solicit shopworkers' *fundamental, functional* and *ideological loyalties* to unions and the labour movement. In 1951, a John Lewis Partner frustrated with job evaluation and problems with promotion in the Partnership argued, 'There is only one way by which we Partners can safeguard our security of tenure and end such abuses as the Gestapo-like keeping of secret dossiers by the management. That is to join the appropriate Trade Union *en masse*.'²⁶⁷ Like continued forms of paternalism, new managerial styles in British and American stores served many other purposes than anti-unionism in the post-war years. However, as this Partner's call to action suggests, it was the limitations of both old and new managerial styles that opened department and variety store institutions to retail unionisation.

²⁶⁷ 'The Partnership's Integrity,' *JLPG* 33 (27 October 1951), 505.

Union Loyalties

In the labor movement nothing counts so much as loyalty—loyalty of members of a union to each other in a great cause, loyalty of the officers of a local union to each other in the interest of their joint responsibility, loyalty of one union to another in their hour of need, loyalty of all locals to each other in a common cause, and loyalty of the labor movement to the general principles and laws of the American Federation of Labor.

**'Loyalty', *Detroit Labor News*,
Reprinted in *Retail Clerks Advocate*, 1941.¹**

¹ 'Loyalty,' *RCA* 44 (March-April 1941), 28.

Chapter Four

The Importance of Member Loyalty to Shopworkers' Unions

To date, many British and American labour histories have focused on the trade union as a political or economic institution, telling the story of elected officials, their decisions and activities. This top-down approach to what might otherwise be considered bottom-up history has offered important historical explanations for the rise and decline of trade unionism in Britain and America in the 20th century, the ever-evolving relationship between trade unions and national political parties, and the role of trade unions in the construction of modern industrial societies.²

A subject of much less frequent, but equally important, study has been the internal relationships between trade union officials and members on the one hand, and among rank-and-file members on the other. Recently, labour historians have begun to examine the importance of these relationships to the advancement of political alliances and ideological agendas beyond the union. In this vein, Jim Phillips analysed unresolved tensions between British dockworkers and officials of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) which were expressed through unofficial strikes during the Labour Party's period in government from 1945-1951. He concluded that the post-war trade union-Labour Party alliance was dependent in part on the ability of union leaders to minimise problems with dissent within the unions by gaining and maintaining the confidence of their rank-and-file constituencies.³ In the American context, Elizabeth Fones-Wolf has argued that post-war trade union officials had to court the loyalties of their members actively through social, political and educational programmes. Union leaders intended these programmes to rival the refined company cultures being created through improved human relations in the workplace during the post-war years. However, these programmes also helped to build grassroots support for a

² For example, H. A. Clegg, Alan Fox, A. F. Thompson, *A History of British Trade Unions Since 1889* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994). Henry Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, 5th Ed. (London: Penguin, 1992). Patrick Renshaw, *American Labor and Consensus Capitalism, 1935-1990* (Jackson, Miss.: Univ. of Mississippi, 1991).

³ Jim Phillips, *The Great Alliance: Economic Recovery and the Problems of Power 1945-1951* (London: Pluto Press, 1996).

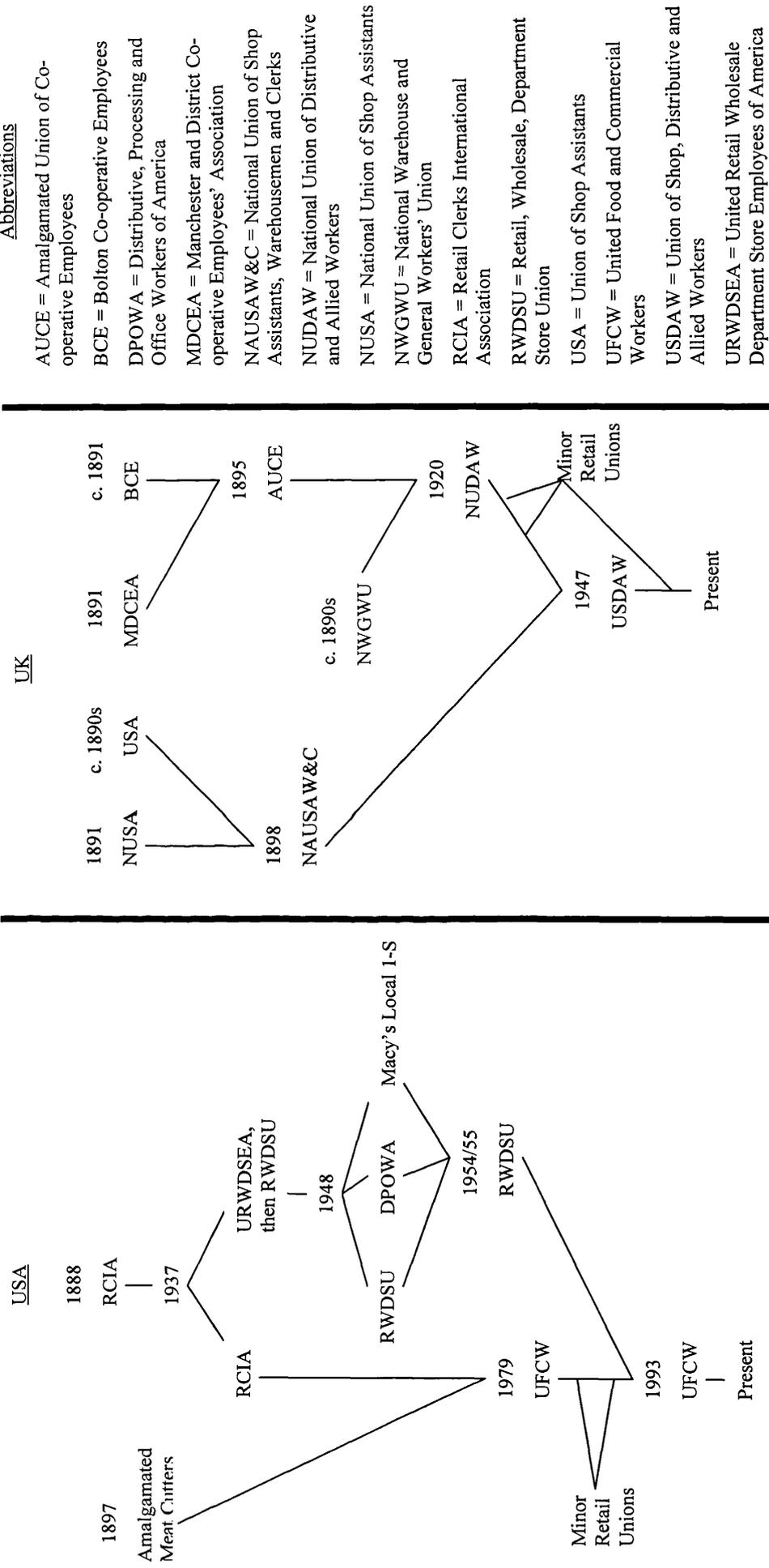
liberal political agenda to counter the strength of conservative business activists in Washington.⁴

The present analysis of British and American shopworkers' unions will follow on from these studies, demonstrating the deep interconnectedness of the unions' social, economic and political activities. It will explore the reasons social solidarity and member loyalty within the unions were so important to the unions' economic and political activities in the workplace, the local community and the national political arena. Rather than taking loyalty for granted as a condition of union membership, the following three chapters will highlight the extent to which trade union loyalty was a *process* of constant negotiation. This process was never far removed from the workplace or from retail employers' rival efforts to solicit and maintain employee loyalties. Neither did union methods of constructing member loyalties differ significantly from those employed by retail managers. Indeed, many of the same analytical tools introduced in Chapter One will help to explain the nature of union loyalties. These include the concepts of exit and voice, and examination of the functions served by subordination of rival loyalties, reciprocity and interpersonal relationships within the unions.

This chapter will examine why loyalty was important for the retail unions, which had become bureaucratic economic and political institutions in their own right by the inter-war years. The next chapter will address the ways shopworkers' unions' administrators and organisers strategically attempted to solicit, construct and maintain *fundamental, functional* and *ideological loyalties* among extant and potential members in the mid-twentieth century. The final chapter will analyse the extent to which the British and American shopworkers' unions succeeded in soliciting loyalties from retail workers, and department and variety store workers in particular. There were many trade unions operating in the retail field in the mid-twentieth century, but I will focus primarily on the three most influential: the Retail, Wholesale, Department Store Union (RWDSU) and Retail Clerks International Association (RCIA) in America, and the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW) in Britain. (See Figure 4.1.)

⁴ Elizabeth A. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-60* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

Figure 4.1. Evolution of the major American and British shopworkers' unions



Abbreviations

- AUCE = Amalgamated Union of Co-operative Employees
- BCE = Bolton Co-operative Employees
- DPOWA = Distributive, Processing and Office Workers of America
- MDCEA = Manchester and District Co-operative Employees' Association
- NAUSAW&C = National Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks
- NUDDAW = National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers
- NUSA = National Union of Shop Assistants
- NWGWU = National Warehouse and General Workers' Union
- RCIA = Retail Clerks International Association
- RWDSU = Retail, Wholesale, Department Store Union
- USA = Union of Shop Assistants
- UFCW = United Food and Commercial Workers
- USDAW = Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers
- URWDSEA = United Retail Wholesale Department Store Employees of America

'Ambassadors and missionaries'⁵: Recruiting new members

At the most basic level shopworkers' unions depended on their members' *fundamental loyalties* to provide the numerical membership base that negotiators and activists needed to support their bargaining and political activities. Because the unions were generally bargaining from a weaker position in the workplace where unskilled and semi-skilled shopworkers were easily replaced, as well as in the political arena where unions had to face the political and economic power of business activists, strength in numbers mattered. Through collection of union dues, increased membership also helped to provide reserves to protect members against undue hardship during periods of industrial action, and funded the specialisation and professionalisation of union leadership in the post-war years.

By the mid-twentieth century the major shopworkers' unions in the US and Britain were concerned to expand their membership through organisation of the private, dry goods trade. In America, the RCIA was heavily dependent on the grocery trade for its membership, particularly after the RWDSU broke away in 1948, taking most of the RCIA's New York City department store members with them. In Britain in the inter-war years the membership of USDAW's predecessor unions was dominated by Co-operative employees, who accounted for 94 per cent of NUDAW membership and 54 per cent of NAUSA&C membership in 1931.⁶ In 1947, only five per cent of shopworkers employed in all British retail and wholesale businesses outside Co-operatives were unionised, with the dry goods sector least organised.⁷

The largely unorganised dry goods private trade offered union leaders the organising base they needed to build their political and bargaining power. In turn, the failure to organise this crucial sector of the retail labour market threatened to undermine unions' hard-earned advances. Not least was the problem of wages. Through the first half of the twentieth century in America, the gains made by the RCIA in the grocery trades were jeopardised by consistently lower wage rates in department and variety stores. Given that the RWDSU's department store membership was largely concentrated in New York City, it did little to raise

⁵ 'Realising Our Hopes,' *ND* 2 (11 Dec. 1948), 593.

⁶ A. M. Carr-Saunders, P. Sargant Florence, Robert Peers, *Consumer's Co-operation in Great Britain: An Examination of the British Co-operative Movement* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938), 352.

⁷ P. C. Hoffman, 'The Five-Year Million,' *ND* 1 (26 July 1947), 275.

wages nationally for non-food shopworkers. (See Table 4.1.) In Britain the problem was somewhat different. In order for USDAW to maintain and increase its power in the labour market, it had to break new ground outside of the Co-operative retail societies, which were showing signs of employment stagnation by the early 1950s.⁸ By the mid-twentieth century it was clear that for the retail unions to advance in both membership and power, the organising hurdle in department and variety stores would have to be overcome.

One of the main challenges to organisation in department and variety stores was that the recruitment techniques used in the grocery or Co-operative stores were not easily transferable. From the inter-war years, USDAW benefited from the rules passed by the majority of local Co-operative society management committees requiring their employees to join a trade union, effectively providing for union shop bargaining conditions even in the Co-op's dry goods stores.⁹ These rules clearly held little sway outside of the Co-ops where shopworkers joined the union on a voluntary, individual basis. In America, comparable union shop provisions, common to the grocery trades, were not unheard of in the dry goods private trade. Macy's of New York was a prime example of the potential for a union shop in department stores. However, like Macy's, the majority of stores with full unionisation were in cities with strong traditions of unionisation in other trades, including New York City, Boston, Pittsburgh, San Francisco and Seattle. In the Midwest and the South where retail unions were the least successful in organising dry goods employees, many of the trade's white collar workers resented the imposition of compulsory union membership. As an anonymous discount store member of RCIA Local 1401 in Madison, Wisconsin argued, 'I also feel that the closed shop system is undemocratic—I should not be forced to join the union if I do not want to.'¹⁰

The challenge of recruiting union members among the staff of department and variety stores through union shop provisions was compounded by practical

⁸ Employment statistics in *Co-operative Statistics* (Manchester: Co-operative Union, yearly). See Figure 6.10.

⁹ Carr-Saunders et al., *Consumers' Co-operation in Great Britain*, 350-352.

¹⁰ Survey 059-99, Union Opinion Questionnaires of Retail Clerks Union—Local 1401, 'Surveys, c. 1970-75' Box M85-312, MAD2M/12/F7, SHSW. Helen Baker and Robert R. France, *Personnel Administration and Labor Relations in Department Stores: An Analysis of Developments and Practices* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 106-108. On American 'right to work' campaigns and opposition to the closed shop, see Michael Goldfield, *The Decline of Organized Labor in the United States* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1987), 182-187.

Table 4.1. Average Hourly Wages for Non-supervisory Workers by Trade and Gender in American Retail, 1961

Type of Store	Ave. Hourly Wage (AHW) \$	Men		Women	
		Ave. Hourly Wage, Men (AHW-M) \$	AHW-M as Per cent of Retail Total AHW (\$1.62) %	Ave. Hourly Wage, Women (AHW-W) \$	AHW-W as Per cent of Retail Total AHW (\$1.62) %
General Merchandise	1.43	1.86	115	1.25	77
<i>Department stores</i>	1.57	2.01	124	1.36	84
<i>Limited price variety</i>	1.08	1.38	85	1.03	64
Food	1.67	1.78	110	1.45	90
<i>Grocery</i>	1.69	1.77	109	1.52	94
Apparel and accessories	1.50	1.86	115	1.31	81
<i>Men's and boys' clothing and furnishing</i>	1.75	1.89	117	1.38	85
<i>Women's ready-to-wear</i>	1.36	1.57	97	1.34	83
<i>Shoes</i>	1.71	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Furniture, home furnishings and appliances	1.85	1.97	122	1.47	91
<i>Furniture, home furnishings and equipment</i>	1.86	1.98	122	1.51	93
<i>Household appliances</i>	1.78	1.91	118	1.37	85
Building materials, hardware, farm equipment	1.78	1.83	113	1.43	88
Motor vehicle dealers	2.04	2.08	128	1.66	102
Gasoline service centres	1.29	1.30	80	1.16	72
Drug and proprietary	1.40	1.79	110	1.14	70
Miscellaneous	1.55	1.75	108	1.23	76
Retail trade total	1.62	1.80	111	1.32	81

Source: U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employee Earnings in Retail Trade, June 1961*, Bulletin 1338-8 (Washington, D.C., 1962).

impediments to organisation. Unlike the shop floor of manufacturing industries or even grocery shops where the variety of job descriptions were circumscribed by automation, a single department store's staff could represent hundreds of job titles with a significantly diverse range of responsibilities and remuneration. During a visit to America in 1959, USDAW's Research Officer, T. W. Cynog-Jones met one department store director who claimed to have in his store alone 976 grades of employment with corresponding rates of pay.¹¹

The inherent diversity of job remits in department stores erected psychological barriers that were only exacerbated by divisions between selling and non-selling departments, between selling departments and between full-time and part-time staff. One London department store van driver was keenly aware of the differences between departments in his store at mid-century. Of the lack of sociality between selling and non-selling departments, he said:

We had no reason to go over to the store. To us the store was a posh place where rich people go and spend their money, you know [. . .] to us it was them and us. Literally, I'm seriously meaning this: them and us. They never came over to us, and we never went over to them.¹²

Even more telling were the differences he described within the delivery department between suburban and city centre drivers like himself:

we had other drivers which were called suburban drivers, and like I said, there was them and us . . . even then there was the, how can I put it, the dividing line. They would be drivers who went to suburbia, and we would be town drivers. And the strange thing was, we'd all muck together, and keep together and laugh and talk and joke, and they would too . . . we didn't mingle. I can't explain why, but we didn't. No, they had that side of the yard, and we had that side of the yard.¹³

The differences between selling and non-selling departments and within departments as described by this interviewee were often reinforced visually with different dress codes, which further simplified in-group and out-group identification. (See Figure 4.2.) Such strong departmental identifications made organising department stores little different from organising a series of small shops, but for the advantage that all of these shops were most often under one roof.

¹¹ T. W. Cynog-Jones, 'America Re-Visited,' *ND* 13 (3 Oct. 1959), 611-612.

¹² Author's interview with 69-year old male shopworker, 4 June 2003, transcript in author's possession.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Figure 4.2. Strawbridge & Clothier departments, 1956



At Strawbridge & Clothier's, as at most other department stores, interdepartmental loyalties were overlaid with gender, class and racial difference. Note that by 1956 the 'white collar' sales and office staff had no set dress code, compared with the 'blue collar' workers in this and the next image.

Store Chat 38 (July – Aug. 1956), 8-9.

The sociological diversity of the dry goods retail labour market in terms of gender, race and age also frustrated union organisers' efforts to help shop floor workers see beyond interdepartmental differences. As Table 4.2 demonstrates, differences between work departments were often overlaid with gender difference. Whereas skilled maintenance staff in British general merchandise stores were exclusively male in 1967, restaurant staff, sales staff, tailors and dressmakers were almost exclusively female. Race worked in similar ways, particularly in America where selling and non-selling departments were often distinctly segregated, not only in the South but in the North as well. For example, photographs from Strawbridge & Clothier's department store in Philadelphia in the post-war years demonstrated that the store's staff restaurant, housekeeping and maintenance employees were almost exclusively African-American.¹⁴ (See Figure 4.3.) And Strawbridge & Clothier's was not outside the norm. Until the 1940s, African-Americans were primarily limited to service employment in department stores, including work as maids, elevator operators, bus boys and counter girls, because store managers frequently claimed that white customers would refuse to be served at the sales counter by black salespeople. After decades of civil rights protests and 'Don't Buy Where You Can't Work' boycotts, many stores began hiring more African-Americans into white collar sales and clerical jobs from the 1940s through the '60s. Still, the majority remained in blue collar manual and service occupations within retail employment.¹⁵ (See Table 4.3.) Like gender and race, age also played an important role in the formation of work groups and in-group identification. In a study of relations between saleswomen on the same selling floor in one American department store in 1940, George Lombard found that age was a significantly divisive factor. Older saleswomen in this study tended not to even learn the names of younger saleswomen. In turn younger saleswomen claimed their elders were 'unfriendly old ladies' who treated them like children.¹⁶

¹⁴ See also photos, SC 39 (March 1957), 9. *Store Chat* Oct. 1949-Dec. 1951 folder, Box 16, Hagley Center Pictorial, HML.

¹⁵ Charles R. Perry, *The Negro in the Department Store Industry* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Penn. Press, 1971). Gordon F. Bloom, F. Marion Fletcher, Charles R. Perry, *Negro Employment in Retail Trade: A Study of Racial Policies in the Department Store, Drugstore, and Supermarket Industries* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Penn. Press, 1972). Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Post-war America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 44-53.

¹⁶ George F. F. Lombard, *Behavior in a Selling Group: A Case Study of Interpersonal Relations in a Department Store* (Boston: Harvard Univ., 1955), 117-121.

Figure 4.3. Strawbridge & Clothier Employees' Cafeteria Staff



Store Chat (Oct. 1951 folder), Strawbridge & Clothier collection, Hagley Museum and Library Pictorial Collection.

Table 4.3. African-Americans as Percentage of Total Employees in General Merchandise Stores by Occupation, Twelve Cities, 1940, 1966, 1969

Occupational Group	1940*	1966	1969
Officials and managers		2.4	4.2
Professionals	0.6	1.2	3.2
Technicians		3.9	8.2
Sales workers	0.7	5.8	7.6
Office and clerical workers		15.1	13.6
Total white collar	0.7	7.7	8.7
Craftsmen	1.5	9.3	8.7
Operatives	4.0	22.8	21.2
Laborers	8.9	28.3	29.1
Service workers	33.9	36.2	33.0
Total blue collar	13.4	26.1	25.8
Total	3.1	12.3	12.4

* 11 cities, 'Non-white employment' with large majority African American.

Source: Charles R. Perry, *The Negro in the Department Store Industry* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Penn. Press, 1971), 30, 57.

This sort of age rivalry probably only worsened with the growing dominance of young workers in retail. By 1957 one-third of American workers under age 17 were employed in retail, mostly in part-time jobs.¹⁷ These layers of sociological difference provided organisational barriers for the unions to overcome in their organising drives.

In addition to the multiple layers of personal and group identities among department store staff, during the 1950s and '60s, American retail unions faced new legal impediments to recruitment as a result of local and federal court cases highlighting the tension between store owners' property rights and employees' rights to freedom of speech. Because of the unique interpersonal nature of retail production, local and federal courts limited the space available to either employee or non-employee union organisers in efforts to protect the convenience of the customer and the private property rights of employers. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) heard cases brought by department store executives who claimed that the shop floor recruitment drives administered by outside organisers illegally interfered with customer relations, and by RCIA and RWDSU locals who argued that stores illegally interfered with shopworkers' right to organise.¹⁸

A case in point was the NLRB's 1952 decision, *Marshall Field & Company v Retail Clerks International Association, Local 1515-MF*. In 1950 Marshall Field and Company held a rigorously enforced 'no-solicitation' policy that disallowed union recruitment by outside organisers almost entirely and severely limited the conditions under which staff could encourage union membership among other employees. RCIA Chicago Local 1515 filed against the company for unfair labour practices, and the case eventually went to the NLRB. In its initial decision of February 1952, the Board ruled that either employee or non-employee organisers could solicit union membership in public areas including staff restaurants, 'aisles, corridors, elevators, escalators and stairways inside the store', with the exception of selling floor space. However, Marshall Field's continued its 'no solicitation' policy while contesting the decision, which was refined in the spring of 1953. The new decision reinstated rules barring non-

¹⁷ 'Young Workers are Growing in Importance,' *RCA* 61 (Dec. 1958), 14.

¹⁸ For a summary of major NLRB decisions affecting department stores up to 1950, see Leonard Rovins, 'NLRB Policies on Bargaining Units Among Store Employees,' *Stores* 32 (Aug. 1950), 19, 38-39, 50-54.

employee organisers from membership solicitation in any area of the store, and reinstated strict limitations on solicitation of employees by other employees.¹⁹

As the Marshall Field's case demonstrated, even when the unions secured legal successes, those gains were always dependent on employer compliance and were always subject to organised legal resistance from business. Furthermore, as Lizabeth Cohen has shown, the legal complexity of union solicitation regulations only worsened with the privatisation of commercial space that resulted from the construction of suburban shopping centres in the 1960s and '70s.²⁰ In effect, as the RCIA and RWDSU waged their legal battles on a store by store and state by state basis, they relied heavily on their members to bolster membership by word of mouth in the hallways, elevators and rest rooms protected by labour law.

The legal restrictions to shop floor union recruitment were only the most tangible impediments to organisation. Long before shopping centres, shopworkers' unions in both Britain and America struggled to overcome the basic limitations placed on retail organising efforts by store schedules. The nature of department and even early variety store business meant that as long as the store was open, every department and sales counter needed to be staffed. Consequently, department and variety store employees had staggered lunch and rest breaks, which made it virtually impossible for employee or non-employee organisers to address all the members of a single department at one time. When staff restaurants and rest rooms were off limits, organisation had to take place on a person-by-person basis.²¹ Mass organisation of retail employees was also inhibited by the fact that unlike many workers in the docks and factories, the community of workers in one retail company did not often live in the same neighbourhood. This incurred difficulties for union organisers and for shopworkers who found it difficult to attend union meetings outside regular working hours, and who were exposed to employer propaganda and even intimidation without the counter-balancing effect of community solidarity.²²

¹⁹ S. G. Lippman, 'Momentous Decision,' *RCA* 55 (June 1952), 2-3. Retail Executive Office Notice No. 1092 (20 Feb. 1952); No. 1126 (1 April 1953).

²⁰ Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*, 274-78.

²¹ Lippman, 'Momentous Decision,' 3.

²² 'Next Chapter For U.S.D.A.W.: The Pioneering Spirit,' *ND* 8 (30 Jan. 1954), 71-72, 90. On the importance of neighbourhood community to worker solidarity, see W. W. Knox, *Industrial Nation: Work, Culture and Society in Scotland, 1800 – Present* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1999), 265-271, 278-279. On retail employer intimidation, see Sanford Jacoby, *Modern*

With the psychological, legal and practical restraints on member recruitment in department and variety stores, retail union organisers relied heavily on *functionally loyal* employees to speak well of the union and promote the values of membership to the millions of unorganised private and dry goods trade workers. As C. C. Coulter, Secretary-Treasurer of the RCIA in the 1930s argued, 'One union minded sales person with leadership ability and acumen is very often the motivating power that sets the sales force of a store into motion and the result is a stampede toward organization of the entire personnel.'²³ While most union locals would likely have settled for a canter or at best a gallop rather than a stampede, the presence of individual employees loyal to the union and its goals was an invaluable asset for organisers struggling to overcome the psychological barriers and group identities inhibiting interdepartmental identification and organisation.

Interpersonal connections were important to organising across stores as well. In 1950 one concerned USDAW member argued, 'The solid foundations [of the union] were laid by personal contact and discussion of common problems by people who felt that conditions could be better than they were.' He advised that it was crucial for union members to promote the union while shopping in private trade shops, in order to bolster the courage of workers capable of self-organisation.²⁴ Similarly, the Editor of the *Retail Clerks Advocate* encouraged RCIA members to extend 'the fraternal hand of encouragement' to their unorganised counterparts in department stores, arguing that 'Certainly every member of the RCIA must realize that our future prospects for continued gains through collective bargaining lie in this direction.'²⁵ And in the early 1960s, when the RCIA faced the challenge of organising the burgeoning discount stores like Wal-Mart, the international union advised its members to visit their local discount stores and laud the benefits of unionisation among clerks, 'before personnel policies are jelled which may obstruct the desire of discount store

Manors: Welfare Capitalism Since the New Deal (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 130-140.

²³ C. C. Coulter, 'Balances and Proportions,' *RCA* 41 (Jan.-Feb. 1938), 1-3.

²⁴ 'Organising Problems,' *ND*, 4 (22 July 1950), 464.

²⁵ 'Union Successes Stem from Membership Commitment,' *RCA* 70 (Jan. 1967), 7.

employees for self-organization'.²⁶ In order to improve union membership among department and variety store employees, shopworkers' unions relied on members' *functional loyalties* to fuel the grassroots recruitment efforts so fundamental to organisation of the dry goods trade. (See Figure 4.4.)

Recruitment of new members was only the basic membership challenge faced by union organisers in the distributive trades. Retention was also difficult, particularly during World War II, when the unions had not only to compete with industry, but with the army as well. By 1941 over 38,000 NUDAW members—24 per cent of the union's male membership—had entered the armed forces, resulting in lost revenue of £75,000 that year alone.²⁷ But problems with retention plagued the retail unions following the war as well. Between 1947 and 1948, the newly amalgamated USDAW recruited 171,000 new members in Britain, many of whom worked in the largely unorganised private trade outside the Co-operative movement. However, in 1949 Acting General Secretary A. W. Burrows regretfully informed the national union that 151,000, or 88 per cent, of those new members had lapsed.²⁸ In America one Chicago union reported that in order to enlist 5000 members, the union had to receive 15,000 membership application cards. As one organiser lamented, 'You've got to keep organizing day and night, but trying to keep up with the turnover is just a mathematical impossibility. It's like pouring water into a sieve.'²⁹ High rates of membership loss were a drain on union organising budgets and overall morale, and continually undermined unions' claims to represent the interests of shopworkers. Without maintenance of membership, the locals' and in turn the national unions' long-term goals would be for nought. Indeed, for union locals, the 'potency and success of intended activities' depended on 'stability of membership'.³⁰

The reasons for 'membership leakage', as Burrows described it, were numerous. The long-term problematic instability of the dry goods retail labour force was one of the key factors undermining maintenance of membership in

²⁶ 'The RCIA Faces a Challenge and an Opportunity In the Growth of Discount Merchandising,' *RCA* 64 (Oct. 1961), 4. See also 'An Appeal to Our Membership,' *Midwest Labor World* 3 (9 May 1945), 1; 'Next Chapter For U.S.D.A.W.', 71-2, 90.

²⁷ A. W. Burrows, 'The N.U.D.A.W. in 1941,' *ND* 21 (4 Jan. 1941), 8-9.

²⁸ 'Politics, Economics & the Union: Acting General Secretary's Speech to South Wales Conference,' *ND* 3 (8 Jan. 1949), 5-6.

²⁹ Quoted in George G. Kirstein, *Stores and Unionism: A Study of the Growth of Unionism in Dry Goods and Department Stores* (New York: Fairchild Publications, 1950), 108-109.

³⁰ 'Initiative in Organization Work!' *RCA* 49 (Jan.-Feb. 1946), 15.

Figure 4.4. Good ambassadors

Be a Volunteer Organizer for Your Union

The low wages paid by the owners of non-union stores are a threat to the job security and the collective bargaining ability of RCIA members. Strong local unions are their best protection.

You have an opportunity to strengthen your local union and increase your union gains. Volunteer to help organize the unorganized retail store employees. If employees in non-union stores knew about the benefits won by RCIA members they would join too.

Ask your local union officers for organizing pamphlets. Then talk to unorganized store workers. "Sign them up" on union authorization cards and pass the names on to your business agent.

Help Yourself
While Helping Others



Retail Clerks Advocate 72 (April 1969), 34.

shopworkers' unions in both Britain and America. Unions with membership in department and variety stores were afflicted by the high labour turnover rates that beset the British and American dry goods sector through the post-war period, as discussed in Chapter One. In 1948 USDAW's West London Area Organiser, E. A. Wells, identified the related 'Blind-Alley problem' in the private trades as a major impediment to sustainable membership. Employment in dry goods was a dead-end street, he argued, because retail managers routinely staffed their stores with lesser-paid 'juniors' who would either marry, in the case of women, or move on to more lucrative employment, in the case of men, by the age of 21.³¹

Without the potential of a career and long-term employment as incentive for committed membership, union organisers found it difficult to retain the interest, devotion and loyalty of both selling and non-selling workers.³² In effect, the unions had to pursue professionalisation of the trade and fulfilment of members' instrumentalist wage and benefits demands in order to maintain the *fundamental loyalties* that shored up the unions in terms of membership and revenue, a topic discussed further in Chapter Five. However, the unions continually depended on *functionally loyal* members to rejuvenate depleted membership bases by being 'ambassadors and missionaries' of the union creed to their friends and colleagues.

Courting the Consuming Public

The importance of shopworkers' *functional loyalties* to their unions often overlapped with the importance retail employers themselves placed on employees' *functional loyalties*. This was clearest with regard to the shared aim of improving shop floor salesmanship, meant to increase customer patronage and foster customer sympathy with union and employer agendas. Furthermore, for the retail unions, as for retail employers, the shopworker was the main contact with the customer as political ally. However, although unions and employers shared the aim of better serving the customer, the desire of both unions and employers to secure customer sympathy with their often opposing political agendas meant that

³¹ E. A. Wells, 'The Problem of Lapses: How Does It Arise?' *ND 2* (15 May 1948), 220.

³² On the overall problems of maintenance of membership, see Sir William Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades: The History of USDAW* (Manchester: USDAW, c. 1979), 201-210.

shopworkers' *functional* and *ideological loyalties* to union and employer were often put directly at odds in their relationship to the general public as customer.

Like department and variety store employers, the shopworkers' unions were deeply concerned with the state of salesmanship following the Second World War. In America, one of the RCIA's main reasons for concern about salesmanship was that their organising and bargaining strategies were based in part on the claim that unionised salespeople made better, more productive employees. The union was well aware of the stake department store managers held in quality service for the sake of sustained customer good will, improved sales productivity and store reputation. Consequently, the union promised employers that unionisation of their employees, improved working conditions and better pay would attract the career-minded retail staff who could improve shop floor service and productivity. The RCIA relied on the *functional loyalties* of its members to fulfil these promises of good will, in order to ease the hostility of employer-union relations at the bargaining table and to attract new members. As an anonymous contributor to the *Retail Clerks Advocate* argued:

We salespeople, who have joined ourselves into a union, must prove that we are above the unorganised salespeople in selling. We must make all of our employers want to hire union people. We must make the unorganised salespeople want to be one of us and proud that they have joined our ranks.³³

The *functional loyalties* and workplace performance of salespeople were, therefore, a key factor in the RCIA's bargaining and expansion agendas.

In Britain USDAW was also concerned about the quality of shop floor salesmanship, particularly in the 1940s and early '50s when rationing put a premium on both customer and shopworker patience. In 1951, long-time retail union advocate, P.C. Hoffman, put pressure on the Co-operatives to improve service, arguing that the private trade, and department stores in particular, were

³³ 'Take Pride in Your Profession!' *RCA* 52 (April 1949), 14. 'Retail Clerks Add Value to the Goods They Sell,' *RCA* 69 (Feb. 1966), 6. 'Union Salespeople Are a Store's Best Display,' *RCA* 61 (April 1958), 6. 'Clerks Are Retailing's Most Important People,' *RCA* 68 (Nov. 1965), 6. 'RCIA Members Add the Personal Equation to Selling,' *RCA* 64 (Dec. 1961), 6-7. 'Clerk Cornerstone of Commerce,' *RCA* 60 (April 1957), 8. The assertion that union members were happier, better servants of the customer was exemplified in the RCIA's plans for a 'Wise Words' television recruitment campaign in the early 1960s. 'Wise Words' Television Spots Storyboards, n.d., shelf no. M95-242, Box 2, Folder 11, SHSW. Macy's Local 1-S of the RWDSU also demonstrated some attention to the issue of salesmanship: 'Hold That Customer,' *LJ-SN* 13 (May 1967), 2.

gaining ground in the competitive arena of customer loyalty based on their higher quality of customer service. In turn, like the RCIA, Hoffman used the promise of better salesmanship and reminders about the pressures of service-based business competition in attempts to exact higher wages, financial incentives and better training from Co-operative employers.³⁴

Aside from improving public relations with employers and potential recruits, shopworkers' unions relied on their members to strive for quality salesmanship in order to improve relations with the shopping public. Although the unions did not embrace the 'Customer is Boss' ethos to the same extent as employers, they were not neglectful of the fact that customer loyalty to a single store provided job and wage security for those employed in that store. Even more fundamentally, the shopworkers' unions relied on good public relations with customers to strengthen their place at the bargaining table. The RCIA was particularly aware of the customer's power over retail business decisions, including labour relations. In 1950 President of the RCIA, V. A. Housewright, and Secretary-Treasurer, James Suffridge, described the customer as follows:

This "third party" is our ally if we make him so. He rules the thinking of management. He provides the union negotiators with their strongest argument for granting wage increases, better working conditions; health and welfare programs. In short, the "third party"—the customer—is the final arbiter at the negotiating table. There is no appeal from his judgment, and his judgment is reflected in sales volume.³⁵

In both Britain and America, the shopworkers' unions continually called on customers-as-allies at mid-century to assist in strengthening the bargaining power of organised shopworkers. Such campaigns urged consumers to shop early to lessen demand for late opening hours, to support strike demands by respecting picket lines, and to participate in boycotts against employers engaging in unfair labour practices.³⁶ (See Figures 4.5 and 4.6.) In effect, the retail unions were continually concerned to employ members' *functional loyalties* in the workplace

³⁴ P. C. Hoffman, 'The Personal Touch: Disregard it at Your Peril,' *ND* 5 (8 Dec. 1951, 790-791.

³⁵ At a time when most retailers and the government referred to customers as women, the gendered language of this quote is unique. Perhaps this is in part a reflection of the masculinisation of bargaining, even in the retail trade, where representatives of unions and employers were almost exclusively male through the long post-war period. 'Let's Take A Look At Ourselves,' *RCA* 53 (Jan. 1950), 13. 'Retail Clerks Add Value,' 6.

Figure 4.5. Appeal to consumer allies

Shop Early



More personal attention

More clerks per customers

Better buys

Quicker deliveries

your RETAIL CLERKS

Union No. 1207, A. F. of L.

RCIA Locals across America published advertisements and posters similar to this one soliciting the assistance of consumers in union efforts to limit shop opening hours.

Retail Clerks Advocate 57 (May 1954), 9.

to build up a reserve of public goodwill to be tapped during major bargaining activities.

In America the retail unions also counted on their members to encourage shoppers to buy union-made goods. From 1874 the union label encouraged working-class consumers to express their solidarity by buying products made by other unionised workers. For labour leaders, consumer activism through purchase of union label goods was the necessary counterpart to producer activism in the workplace. As Lawrence Glickman has argued, American unions looked on the union label as a means for creating demand for union labour, and as a means for workers to become indirectly employers of labour and owners of the goods they produced.³⁷ Although the relative importance of the union label to the labour movement as a whole decreased in the inter-war period, it remained a central tenet of the RCIA's agenda with regard to the consumer as customer. As I. M. Ornburn, director of the AFL's Union Label Trades Department argued in 1940, 'The three-foot counter in the retail store is the bottleneck of all sales. It is this point where the members of the Retail Clerks' Union become so important in every Union Label campaign.'³⁸ The RCIA picked up on this rhetoric, continually reminding members that the success of the union label campaign depended largely on the *functional loyalties* of RCIA members as salespeople and as customers.³⁹ (See Figure 4.7.)

Retail union members' *functional loyalties* were crucial to union relations with the consumer-as-citizen as well.⁴⁰ From the formation of the RCIA in America in 1888, and the organisation of the Manchester and District Co-operative Employees Association and the National Union of Shop Assistants in Britain in 1891, shopworkers' unions depended on customers to act as activists

³⁶ This is explained in more detail in the Strikes and Boycotts section of Chapter 5. 'Public is the Power Behind the Pickets,' *1428 Message 2* (May 1957), 1, SHSW Microform. On the RCIA's Shop Early campaign, see 'Shop Early,' *RCA 57* (May 1954), 9-10.

³⁷ Lawrence B. Glickman, *A Living Wage: American Workers and the Making of Consumer Society* (London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 108-128.

³⁸ I. M. Ornburn, 'Retail Clerks Important Factor in Union Label Buying,' *RCA 44* (Nov.-Dec. 1940), 7, 11.

³⁹ 'A Union Member's Creed,' *RCA 73* (Feb. 1970), 31.

⁴⁰ For more on power of the consumer as citizen in post-war Britain and America, see Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*. Matthew Hilton, *Consumerism in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Search for a Historical Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003). Matthew Hilton, 'The Fable of the Sheep, Or, Private Virtues, Public Vices: The Consumer Revolution of the Twentieth Century,' *Past & Present* 176 (Aug. 2002), 222-256.

Figure 4.7. The consumer base of labour activism

Sabina Johnson of RCIA Local 888 Sells Women's Apparel at Korvette Fifth Avenue

when she sells to customers...



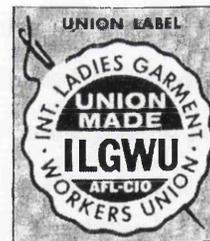
when she buys her own clothes...



... SHE ALWAYS LOOKS FOR THE UNION LABEL

Sabina Johnson is a good union member. She knows that her RCIA membership means better wages and working conditions. She knows that when she buys or sells a union made dress, she helps the union garment worker, who in turn can buy more from the store which displays the RCIA shop card. She looks for the union label when she buys and shows it to her customers when she sells.

The ILGWU label is your guarantee that apparel was made in clean sanitary shops under decent American working conditions. Look for this label in all women's and girls' apparel: *Bathing Suits/Blouses/Coats and Suits/Dresses/Foundation Garments/Girls Wear/Lingerie/Neckwear/Rainwear/Skirts/Slacks/Shorts/Slips/Sleepwear and Robes/Snowsuits/Sweaters and Knitwear.*



Symbol of decency,
fair labor standards and the
American way of life

Retail Clerks Advocate 66 (Nov. 1963), 20.

and allies in the political arena.⁴¹ The shift in consumer activism in both Britain and America toward almost exclusive concern with consumer issues rather than labour conditions following the Second World War meant that the retail unions were left on their own to fight for better hours, wages and working conditions, as discussed below.⁴² However, the consumer-as-citizen could still play an important role in advancing the British and American labour movements' broader political and ideological agendas in the post-war years.

In Britain USDAW did little to capitalise on the fact that their members were in daily contact with the public. Perhaps this was a result of the fact that the majority of the union's members were employed in Co-operative retail shops, and Co-operative employers took over the responsibility the unions would otherwise have had for encouraging employees to promote the ideals of Co-operation and Co-operative/Labour politics to the shopping public.⁴³ In America, on the other hand, the unions were keenly aware that the shopworkers' appeal to the consumer-as-citizen could help bolster the labour movement's public relations campaigns in order to rival the pro-business tendencies of the mass media. The unions could and did appeal directly to citizens through television and radio addresses. The RCIA was a regular sponsor of radio addresses from at least the early 1940s, and sponsored the Dave Garroway national 'Today' show on NBC from the early 1960s, complete with advertisements for RCIA membership.⁴⁴ However, nothing could substitute for the person-to-person relation between the union member and the general public.⁴⁵ Just as the salesperson was the first point of contact between the store and the customer, so could the *functionally* and *ideologically loyal* retail union member be the labour movement's frontline advocate to the general public.

⁴¹ Christopher Hosgood, "'Mercantile Monasteries': Shops, Shop Assistants, and Shop Life in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain,' *Journal of British Studies*, 38 (July 1999), 322-352. Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940*. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 134-138.

⁴² For more on this shift, see Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*; Hilton, *Consumerism in 20th-Century Britain*.

⁴³ For more on Co-operative economic and social politics, see Chapter One. Also, Peter Gurney, *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1996). Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *The Consumers' Co-operative Movement* (London: Longmans, Green, 1921). Carr-Saunders et al., *Consumers' Co-operation in Great Britain*. GDH Cole, *A Century of Co-operation* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1944).

⁴⁴ 'Radio Talk by Wm. E. Brennan,' *RCIA* 44 (Jan.-Feb. 1941), 10-11, 15. Box 2, RCIA records, SHSW. On the broader trend of union-sponsored radio and television programmes in the post-war years, see Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise*, 118-119, 149-150.

⁴⁵ 'Public Relations Are Important to Unions,' *RCA* 64 (June 1961), 6.

Insofar as the 'general public' actually meant the middle-classes who could be swayed to support either business or labour political agendas, there was perhaps no better advocate than the shopworker daily in contact with those middle-class citizens.⁴⁶

One RCIA recruitment campaign made the American unions' interest in shopworkers as public relations advocates explicitly clear. In 1948 the RCIA published a leaflet apparently aimed at unionised workers outside the retail field, which encouraged readers to promote unionism among friends or relatives employed in the retail trades. The union claimed that the 'personal touch' that happy shopworkers, secure in their union membership, brought to the general public 'is of great benefit to organized labor' because 'salespeople are in contact daily, Around The Clock, with the public.' Shopworkers, the pamphlet continued, 'are labor's best emissaries as they deal with the service tradesman, the building tradesman, the clergyman, the attorney, the banker and others. While selling union goods, they also sell themselves and unionism.'⁴⁷

The recruitment pamphlet went on to highlight the potential for the organised shopworker to be the liaison between the labour movement and the middle-class voter. The pamphlet told the story of Jim, the unionised salesman, who convinced shopper Mrs. Jones of the injustice of the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act. Since Jim was such a good and trustworthy clerk, Mrs. Jones carried the message of the union home to her real estate broker husband, his business associates, and her consumer friends who came to understand 'that unions aren't like some people think they are at all. That they are a social necessity'. Thus Jim, the grocery clerk, and May, the department store perfume saleswoman, were key figures at the frontlines of the AFL's political campaigns to sway the political opinions of the general public.⁴⁸

In 1958 the potential political relationship between union salesperson and customer became less theoretical when, according to the *Chicago Tribune*, RCIA President James Suffridge 'advised members to attempt to put in shopping bags leaflets urging voters to register to vote. In conversations with customers on

⁴⁶ American retailers were aware of this advantage to the unions, 'Clerks' Union Maps Big Drive,' *Retail Executive* (2 Aug. 1939), clipping in Local 1254 Folder 29, Box 2, RCIA files, SHSW.

⁴⁷ RCIA, 'Be Wise—Organize: Unionism Around the Clock,' (Lafayette, IN: RCIA, 1948), 3-4. SHSW.

⁴⁸ RCIA, 'Be Wise—Organize'.

political issues, Suffridge said, the members should “state very carefully their position on issues and candidates.”⁴⁹ Suffridge may have optimistically overestimated the openness of customers to political propagandising by the salespeople who served them. Nevertheless, the fact remained that the shop floor offered the British and American labour movements unique opportunities to engage with the customer as shopper and economic ally, *and* with the customer as citizen and political ally. However, fulfilment of this potential depended on the *functional* and *ideological loyalties* of union members and their willingness to be political activists to the benefit of labour interests.

Union Politics and Political Activists

In the mid-twentieth century, the British and American retail unions were committed to lobbying for various forms of state regulation with regard to wages, hours, and working conditions. Such regulation was important to the unions for setting a basic standard of protection for unorganised shopworkers, and for constructing legal and political conditions favourable to union recruitment and bargaining. Union members’ *functional* and *ideological loyalties* were important to the unions in the political arena insofar as the achievement of protection for wages, hours and working conditions was a fundamental union goal dependent on members’ grassroots political activism. It was not sufficient for shopworkers to propagandise customers and fellow employees in the workplace; the success of labour politics in the national arena depended on union members’ active engagement in politics *as union members* during their leisure time.

One of the major political battles the British and American shopworkers’ unions continually had to face was the challenge of securing regulatory wage systems to protect both unionised and non-unionised shopworkers. In the economy of workplace politics, the debate over retail wages predominated as a locus around which various competing loyalties were negotiated and contested for shopworkers. The negotiation of base wage rates served as a point of conflict for all players in the retail trade: for retailers trying to protect profit margins and ensure that increased wages led to increased productivity; for retail workers balancing the social advantages of white-collar work with the stronger economic

⁴⁹ ‘Union Training Political Guns at Customers,’ *Chicago Tribune* (29 Oct. 1958).

security of blue-collar industrialism; and for unions struggling to gain credibility and strength in the retail sector.

Wages in the retail field were not easily regulated because of the diversity of remuneration techniques employed by store managers. While many smaller stores depended on straight salary wage systems to make income more consistent for their employees, most larger department and variety stores incorporated various forms of productive incentive into salespeople's wage packets. The salary-plus-commission payment scheme provided for some basic wage consistency, while offering salespeople a small percentage return on every item sold. The quota-bonus system worked similarly, offering salespeople a basic wage, with a bonus commission paid on sales above certain daily or weekly individual sales quotas. Other stores employed the straight commission system, which allowed salespeople a higher percentage return on sales and made employee income entirely dependent on personal sales incentive. Additionally, individual stores supplemented or amended these basic payment categories by tailoring a variety of combination plans, emphasising individual incentive at certain times or in certain departments, and group sales effort under other conditions. Finally, all of these plans were supplemented by intermittent sales competitions and premiums that offered monetary or material reward for selling highlighted items, for reaching set sales quotas, or for employing better selling techniques.⁵⁰

Whether or not commission and bonus programmes heightened salespeople's incentives to sell more goods, they sparked debate even among retailers as to the fairness of compensating employees according to sales indices that were not necessarily under employee control. It was a generally accepted fact among British and American dry goods retailers that sales varied day by day, month by month, and year by year, according to season, weather, holidays, and external national factors of economic and political stability. More importantly, despite a wide variety of wage programmes in use as stores approached mid-century, fair sales-dependent remuneration systems remained elusive because of

⁵⁰ Donald K. Beckley and William B. Logan, *The Retail Salesperson at Work* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1948), 314-321. 'Remuneration of Sales Staff,' *DR* (23 Aug. 1952), 19. For a discussion of advantages and disadvantages of different wages systems by retailers themselves, see NRDGA, *Management and Personnel Proceedings* (New York: NRDGA, 1941), 10-12.

the seemingly infinite nuance of change and inequality between selling and non-selling departments.⁵¹

In 1948 the US Bureau of Labor's Division of Wage Analysis conducted a study of men's and women's wages in department stores in 16 major American cities, exposing extensive wage inequality. The study found that wages differed greatly by selling or non-selling department, gender and regional location. For example, the average woman selling furniture and bedding in Philadelphia department stores earned \$99.59 a week, compared to weekly earnings of \$44.82 for the same position in Oakland, California, or \$26.71 for women selling notions and trimmings in Atlanta department stores. In non-selling activities, New York women's garment fitters topped out at a weekly average of \$56.25, compared to Atlanta's \$19.11 weekly provisions for passenger elevator operators. Men's wages were similarly diverse, across both region and profession. In Chicago department stores alone, salesmen in major appliance sections made \$114.18 a week, over three times the weekly earnings of sales floor stockmen who earned an average of \$37.70.⁵² There is little evidence to suggest that wage rates were any more standardised in British department stores or in retail generally. The diversity in wage rates within a single department store and between stores only exacerbated the lack of interdepartmental and inter-store identification that impeded union organising campaigns. In effect, the regulation and standardisation of wage rates promised the unions a somewhat more standardised—and presumably more easily organised—membership base, in addition to higher wages.⁵³

In both Britain and America the shopworkers' unions' political approach to wage regulation was to secure a minimum guaranteed weekly or hourly wage over which more complicated negotiations regarding commissions, quotas and

⁵¹ For one comments on weather, season and trade in one British store, see *Hide Group Weekly Bulletin*, HF29/6/1, UGA. Baker and France, *Personnel Administration*, 69-71. Beckley and Logan, *Retail Salesperson*, 318-319. The diversity in retail remuneration systems remained problematic even after retail inclusion under the FLSA in America in 1961: 'Wage-Hour Controls: The First Four Months,' *Stores* 44 (Feb. 1962), 58-65.

⁵² A full report with appendix by Kermit B. Mohn of the Bureau's Division of Wage Analysis report appeared in the *RCA*: 'Department Store Workers' Wages in 16 Cities,' *RCA* 52 (Jan. 1949), 11-14.

⁵³ Researcher Marten Estey correlated the RCIA's post-war success in the grocery trades with the comparatively homogenous work experience and remuneration of employees in that trade. Marten Estey, 'The Retail Clerks,' in Albert A. Blum et al. (Eds.), *White Collar Workers* (New York: Random House, 1971), 68.

wage incentives could take place. The extent to which such negotiations were complicated was well-evidenced in the on-going tensions between USDAW and the Co-operatives in the immediate post-war years regarding incentive bonuses.⁵⁴ From the late 1930s in America and the mid-1940s in Britain, all of the retail unions supported a two-tier approach to determining retail wages: political activism on the national front would secure a guaranteed minimum wage for all retail workers; meanwhile, collective bargaining would secure higher wages for union members. The benefits of this strategy were two-fold. First, a set minimum wage meant that when labour market conditions favoured employers, there was a limit as to how much individual employers in non-union stores could undercut union rates or drive down the price of labour. Second, by securing a set minimum applicable to all retail employees, and offering further advances on top of that for union members, the unions could hope to improve their image among the unorganised majority of the retail labour force and secure new recruits.⁵⁵

Having stated the commonalities between British and American retail wage politics, there were important differences as well. In particular, different wage regulation systems necessarily affected the ways the unions pursued their wages case. In America from 1938 the primary regulatory wage legislation was the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which set a minimum wage for most workers on hourly wages. However, retail businesses and their representative organisations, including the NRDGA, successfully argued that retail should be exempt from federal legislation because it did not constitute interstate commerce and was therefore not liable to federal intervention.⁵⁶ From the late 1930s the wage politics of the RCIA, RWDSU and other unions representing shopworkers focused on undermining the retail businesses' case and bringing the retail trades under federal minimum wage legislation. The unions accepted continued exemption of 'Mom and Pop' stores, and targeted instead the largest retail

⁵⁴ Alan Birch, 'Incentive Bonus Schemes: National Wages Board Rejection,' *ND* 4 (1 April 1950), 208-210. A. C. Stock, 'Bonus and Incentives in Distribution,' *ND* 2 (6 March 1948), 102.

⁵⁵ The two-tier approach was articulated clearly in J. D. Hiscock, 'Shop Wage Rates Too Low,' *ND* 4 (8 July 1950), 403-404. Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 204-205.

⁵⁶ For employers' arguments regarding the Fair Labor Standards Act, see 'The Minimum Wage in Retailing,' *JR* 24 (Feb. 1948), 1-5; 'On Minimum Wages in Retailing—and Elsewhere,' *JR* 25 (Summer 1949), 54-55, 63; 'Federal Minimum Wages and the Retail Exemption,' *Stores* 37 (March 1955), 11-12. 'What the Retail Exemption Means to You,' *Stores* 39 (March 1957), 11-13. 'If FLSA Comes to Retailing,' *Stores* 43 (Jan. 1961), 51-52, 54.

companies, including department stores and variety store chains.⁵⁷ Even after retail employees came under the FLSA in 1962, the American unions had to lobby continually to close loopholes in the minimum wage legislation.⁵⁸ Individual states could set a minimum wage rate to cover employees not protected by the FLSA, so retail employees generally came under those provisions until 1962. Consequently, a secondary branch of union wage politics in the American unions focused on securing a minimum wage for retail under state legislation.⁵⁹

Many stood to gain from retail inclusion under state and federal minimum wage legislation. A 1956 Bureau of Labor Statistics report revealed that although the average hourly wage in retail was \$1.41, 26 per cent of all retail workers earned less than the \$1.00 per hour national minimum wage. The situation was at its worst in the South, where 45 per cent of retail employees earned less than \$1.00 an hour, and in variety stores nationwide where 78 per cent of women and 44 per cent of men earned less than the \$1 rate.⁶⁰ The unions held out the hope that bringing retail under the minimum wage regulations of the FLSA would help to rectify this inequality.

In Britain, where a national minimum wage was not implemented until 1998, the unions with members in the retail trades had to campaign for national wage regulations trade by trade. Early in the Second World War, the Ministry of Labour encouraged the establishment of Joint Industrial Councils (JICs) in trades with low unionisation rates, in order to set basic wage standards.⁶¹ There were several JICs in the retail trades, each covering a specific trade, with each Council

⁵⁷ The following offer transcripts or summaries of the unions' case before various Congressional committees. 'URWDSEA Economic Study In Favor of 65c Minimum Bill,' *RWDSE* 8 (Nov. 1945), 30-31. 'Case for Extended Coverage of Minimum Wage Act,' *RCA* 59 (May 1956), 8-10. 'President Suffridge Asks Congress To Extend the Minimum Wage Act,' *RCA* 62 (July 1959), 5.

⁵⁸ 'RCIA Fights Erosion of Minimum Wage Law,' *RCA* 66 (Dec. 1963), 6.

⁵⁹ 'Arizona Women Clerks Get \$16 Minimum Wage,' *RCA* 42 (March-April 1939), 27. 'New York Board Plans Minimum Wage For Its 500,000 Retail Trade Employees,' *RCA* 48 (July-Aug. 1945), 4-5.

⁶⁰ U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employee Earnings in Retail Trade in October 1956: Distribution of Nonsupervisory Employees by Average Earnings*, Bulletin 1220 (Washington, D.C., 1957). Variety store statistics were reported in 'Labour Department Retail Wage Survey Gives Misleading Picture of Wages,' *RCA* 61 (March 1958), 12. 'BLS Survey Report on Retail Wages Shows One in Four Earning Less than \$1.00 an Hour,' *RCA* 60 (July 1957), 5, 11.

⁶¹ On the history of JICs, see W. Hamish Fraser, *A History of British Trade Unionism, 1700-1998* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 140-142, 188. See also T. W. Cynog Jones, *The Regulation of Wages in the Retail Trades, 1936-1945*, NAUSA&C, 1945, cited in Robert E. L. Knight, 'Unionism Among Retail Clerks in Post-war Britain,' *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 14 (July 1961), 515-527.

composed of representatives of trade unions and employers' associations operating in that trade. After Parliament passed the Wages Councils Act in 1945, Wages Councils with both employer and union representation were established in the retail trades to replace the JICs. From 1949 the Retail Drapery, Outfitting and Footwear Trades Wages Council covered most department and variety store employees, setting a statutory minimum wage for these workers for the first time.⁶²

Although negotiations through the Wages Councils tended to resemble voluntary employer-union bargaining procedures rather than America's Congressional processes for determining wage minima, Wages Council negotiations were also deeply political. The Wages Council statutory minima were not legally binding simply upon agreement by the employers' associations and unions represented on the Councils. New rates agreed by employers and trade unions had to be approved by the Minister of Labour, who could greatly influence the outcome of Council decisions based on their compliance or non-compliance with government wages policies.⁶³ USDAW, like other British trade unions, depended heavily on its ability to influence the TUC's, and in turn the Labour Party's incomes policies through the post-war period. USDAW, perhaps even more than other trade unions, had much to lose under policies of wage restraint, because their members were near the very bottom of the wages scale. In 1951, USDAW put shopworkers tenth from the bottom of 122 trades with regard to Wages Council rates.⁶⁴ In effect, the union's leadership depended on loyal members to help build public and political support and member enthusiasm for their wages claims by holding branch meetings specifically for that purpose.⁶⁵

⁶² 'The Retail Wages Orders—At Last,' *ND* 3 (1 Oct. 1949), 615-616. 'Retail Clothing Workers: New Minimum Rates,' *ND* 3 (30 April 1949), 278. Knight, 'Unionism Among Retail Clerks,' 517-518.

⁶³ As occurred at least three times: 'Why the Delay?' *ND* 3 (25 June 1949), 385. 'Wages Councils and Commission,' *ND* 4 (5 Aug. 1950), 471. 'Attack on Shopworkers' Wages,' *ND* 6 (2 Aug. 1952), 496-497, 506.

⁶⁴ 'Demand for Substantial Increases,' *ND* 5 (17 Feb. 1951), 99-100. USDAW's Executive Council were critical of the Labour Party's first White Papers on Personal Incomes, Costs and Prices in 1948, but vacillated in their support for both Labour and Conservative incomes policies thereafter. 'Profits and Wages,' *ND* 2 (21 Feb. 1948), 73. Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 194-195, 267-272. For a general background on post-war incomes policies, see Chris Wrigley, *British Trade Unions Since 1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 55-66.

⁶⁵ 'Enthusiasm and Effort. . . Both Must Be Behind the Wage Application,' *ND* 8 (17 July 1954), 474.

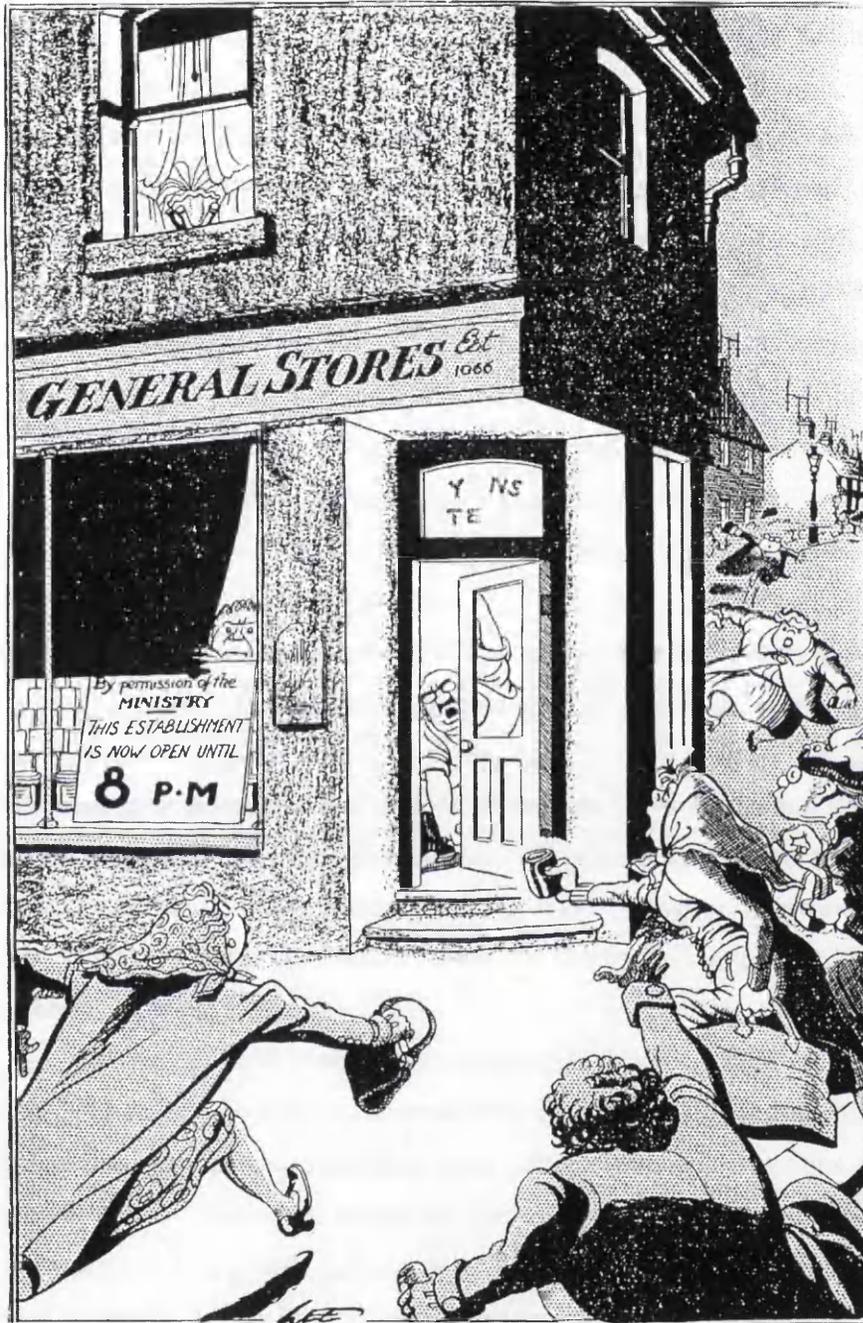
Another of the continuous political struggles the shopworkers' unions engaged in over the entire course of the twentieth century was that regarding the local, regional, and national regulation of working hours for retail employees. Work weeks of up to ninety hours for British shop assistants had been a pivotal point of organisation for the first National Union of Shop Assistants in 1891. Similarly, in America the RCIA's major point of recruitment and political mobilisation from its founding in 1888 through the late 1920s was an 'Early Closing Campaign' focused on limiting shop opening hours and in turn employee working hours. By the inter-war years shopworkers' unions in Britain and America had engaged in a long and very public struggle to decrease the notoriously long hours of department and dry goods stores, often fighting with the leadership and support of customers and social reformers behind them.⁶⁶ (See Figure 4.8.)

Susan Porter Benson has reported that union and consumer campaigns to limit shop assistants' working hours were initially successful in the United States where both large and small retailers eliminated evening shopping hours. As a result, by the 1920s American women retail employees were working shorter hours than their female industrial counterparts. However, during the Great Depression, store hours once again increased, even as manufacturing hours were decreasing, so that by 1937 female shop workers were seven times more likely than the average working woman to work over forty-four hours a week.⁶⁷

The British shopworkers' unions also experienced some early successes with the Shops Acts of 1912 and 1928. The first Act secured the weekly half-holiday, setting a 5 ½-day trading week, and the latter set compulsory shop closing hours at 8:00 pm, with a 9:00 pm closing one day a week. While neither of these Acts directly limited working hours, by curtailing shop opening hours they effectively shortened the work week for shop assistants as well. Although unambiguous statistics on working hours in dry goods stores prior to the Second World War are not available for the British trade, it might be assumed that without

⁶⁶ Interestingly, Marten Estey has attributed the earliest of early closing movements in America to employer rather than employee impetus: Marten Estey, 'Early Closing: Employer-Organised Origin of the Retail Labor Movement,' *Labor History* 13 (Fall 1972), 560-570. See also, *1891-1991, Usdaw—A Century of Service* (Manchester: Co-operative Press, 1991), 5, 14-15. Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 219-228. Michael Harrington, *The Retail Clerks* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1962), 6-7. Kirstein, *Stores and Unionism*, 3-24. Hosgood, 'Mercantile Monasteries,' 322-252.

Figure 4.8. The insatiable demand for late hours



Cartoon by Lee. Reproduced by courtesy of the "London Evening News."

"Here they come ! Keep open till midnight and some of 'em round here would still be dashing up at closing-time for something or other."

The British and American retail unions, and many retail stores selling both food and non-food goods, fought an ongoing battle against consumers and larger stores lobbying for extended shop opening hours.

New Dawn 6 (22 Nov. 1952), 768.

staggered shift systems (which would not come to fruition until after the war), most full-time shop assistants worked whenever their stores were open.⁶⁸ For both British and American department and variety store workers then, the legally-ensured 40-hour week was still an elusive goal toward the end of the inter-war years, despite earlier advances.

There were signs of change in America in the spring of 1941 when RWDSU Local 1250 in New York obtained the first contracted 40-hour, five-day week (down from a city-wide 45-hour week) in their negotiations with Hearn's department store. Only six months later strikers at Gimbel's department store secured the same provision, and by the end of the year almost all the non-union stores in New York City had made the transition to shorter hours, although not necessarily to the five-day week.⁶⁹ But, as the persistence of longer working hours in other cities made clear, the shopworkers' unions' national membership and the retail labour force as a whole would not be guaranteed a forty-hour work week without state or federal legislation. A 1952 NRDGA study of more than 600 department and specialty stores in 258 American cities and towns showed that in 55 per cent of cities, covering 37 per cent of employees in the survey, full-time department store employees still worked longer than 40 hours a week. Long hours were most prevalent in smaller urban centres.⁷⁰ The RCIA and RWDSU's post-war battle for retail inclusion under the Fair Labor Standards Act was not just a matter of setting a minimum wage then, but also of bringing shopworkers in all sizes of urban centres and stores under the hours and overtime legislative protections provided by the Act.

The five-day work week did not necessarily follow on from provisions for the 40-hour week. As Benson demonstrated, early reductions in the work week for American dry goods employees were secured through reductions in store operating hours.⁷¹ However, during the Second World War it became clear that for American unions a work week of fewer hours did not necessarily translate into longer weekends or evenings at home. In part, this was a consequence of War

⁶⁷ Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 196-200.

⁶⁸ Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 219-223.

⁶⁹ Baker and France, *Personnel Administration*, 118-119.

⁷⁰ The full report offers an Appendix listing each city with its common opening days, trading hours, work days, working hours and store hours: *Store Hours and Employee Schedules* (New York: NRDGA, 1952). See also *Changes in Store & Employee Hours* (New York: NRDGA, 1947).

Manpower regulations, which required that stores abandon the five-day work week and operate six-day, 48-hour employee schedules in areas of critical labour shortage, such as Baltimore and Washington, DC. Even in those cities spared from such regulation, department stores re-initiated the weekly late-night opening to appeal to the millions of women consumers working in war industries. In 1945 the War Manpower Commission and Army authorities requested that stores which had not already done so institute night openings to help cut down on absenteeism in war plants.⁷²

The years immediately following the war would make permanent this reversion to the six-day trading week in America, with single or multiple weekly late night openings. In 1949, 69 per cent of cities in an NRDGA study of department store hours reported late-night openings, up from 60 per cent only one year earlier. This trend toward later hours would only increase over the course of the 1950s and '60s with the expansion of discount stores and suburban shopping malls that became notorious for long shopping hours.⁷³ The move to longer opening hours was in part a response to and encouragement of changes in shopping habits on the part of retailers. However, it also resulted from the fact that store opening hours in the US could not be limited by law for risk of being overturned in the courts on the basis of unconstitutional interference with trade. The only exception was Sunday trading which was regulated by state, county, and/or city law.⁷⁴ It made little sense then, for the unions to expend time and resources—not to mention political capital with the consuming public—fighting a losing battle for further legal restrictions that would never materialise.

Given the rate at which consumers adapted to the reversion to longer shopping hours, the American unions were quick to desert their attempts to limit trading hours, and focused instead on securing the five-day week by union

⁷¹ Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 196-200.

⁷² This survey also has a city-by-city Appendix, documenting regional differentiation. 'Current Trends in Store and Employee Hours,' *Stores* (March 1950), 20-26. Store Management Group Report, *Changes in Store and Employee Hours* (New York: NRDGA, 1947), 1-3. The regional differentiation that defined working and shop hours in America was a subject of commentary by the USDAW members who visited America during the 1952 Anglo-American Productivity Team's visit: T. W. Cynog-Jones, 'Shop Hours & Working Hours,' *ND* 6 (6 Dec. 1952), 771-772. On late-night sales during war, 'Sales in the Night!' *DSE* 5 (10 May 1942), 2.

⁷³ 'Current Trends in Store and Employee Hours,' 21. On shopping malls, see Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*, 264-265.

contract and grassroots political activism. In 1950, although 56 per cent of urban areas surveyed by the NRDGA reported a work week of 40 hours or less for department and specialty store employees, only 21 per cent reported a five-day work week. By comparison, 59 per cent reported a six-day week, this being most common in the least populated urban areas, such as Augusta, Maine and Ithaca, New York.⁷⁵ The early five-day-week breakthroughs in New York City in 1941, and consequent advances in Washington, D. C., Hartford, Connecticut, Providence, Rhode Island, and Springfield, Massachusetts in 1945/46 demonstrated that if one department store in a city instituted the five-day employee work week, even with six-day trading, the other stores in that city were likely to follow suit.⁷⁶ Consequently, while the American unions fought for 40-hour week regulations in Congress, their political and bargaining battles for the five-day work week would be waged on a city-by-city basis.

The challenges facing USDAW and the other British trade unions representing shopworkers were both similar to and distinct from the American context. In both countries the unions were fighting in the post-war years to secure a five-day, forty-hour work week for their members. However, the British and American union strategies for doing so diverged from the start of the Second World War. In Britain the war had an effect on shop hours opposite to the American experience. Blackouts, fuel restrictions, and various short- and long-term government regulations of shop closing times meant that shop hours decreased, rather than increased over the course of the war. In this context, the unions continued to rely on both legal and practical restrictions to trading hours to provide for shorter work weeks.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ An overview of some of the state laws still in place in 1967 to restrict Sunday trading can be found in David H. Bowen, 'Sunday Shopping: An Innovation Fraught with Dissent,' *Stores* 49 (Nov. 1967), 19-22.

⁷⁵ 'Current Trends in Store and Employee Hours,' 23, 26.

⁷⁶ Particularly as long as labour competition remained high. This evidence comes from an NRDGA-sponsored debate about the value of different work weeks versus trading weeks, which includes an appendix of stores from 35 communities. Store Management Group, *Changes in Store and Employee Hours*.

⁷⁷ 'War-Time Problems,' *ND* 20 (13 April 1940), 175. J. T. Price, 'Should Shops Shut Sharply at Six?' *ND* 22 (17 Jan. 1942), 20-21. Harold Boardman, 'Should Shops Shut Sharply at Six? Yes!—If That's the Hour,' *ND* 22 (31 Jan. 1942), 34-35. But war-time advancements in shop working conditions did not necessarily go forward with the support of trade unionists in other trades, as evidenced by an article by the General Secretary of the National Association of Theatrical and Kine Employees, T. O'Brien, 'Shifts for Shops: Shop Assistant, Customer, and Early Closing,' *ND* 24 (6 May 1944), 146-147; and reply by Harold Boardman, *ND* 24 (17 June 1944), 194-195.

After the war, however, many shops and stores re-established extended opening hours one or two days a week. Leaders of NUDAW and then USDAW consistently argued that such extended hours constituted a 'retrograde step', moving 'back to the dark days' of turn-of-the-century shop working conditions.⁷⁸ Where the American unions deserted the battle for restricted trading hours, USDAW persisted in its efforts to secure a shorter work week for members and non-members by lobbying for legal continuation of war-time closing hours. USDAW's Parliamentary advocates, including USDAW President and MP Walter E. Padley, continually correlated the shop work week with the trading week and rejected the possibility of shift systems in shop hours debates.⁷⁹ While the American unions quickly accepted the post-war reversion to late-night openings, the British trade unions protested against the 'unsocial hours' shopworkers were expected to work on evenings, weekends and holidays without overtime or compensatory pay. It was not until 1974 that USDAW shifted its strategy from preventing late opening hours to securing increased pay for those working 'unsocial hours'.⁸⁰

Shopworkers' union politics went beyond wages and hours in both Britain and America. The focus of USDAW's political campaigns with regard to working hours in the immediate post-war years were: the Gowers Committee set up by the Labour Government in 1946 to review shop hours; this Committee's reports in 1947 and 1949; the 1950 Shops Act that followed these reports; and future proposed revisions to that Act. However, the Gowers Committee, its reports, and the 1950 Shops Act did not only cover shop hours, but working conditions as well. Part of the union's political campaign then, was to secure health and welfare

⁷⁸ The greatest protest was in 1952 when war-time early closing regulations were fully withdrawn. 'Shop Closing Hours Under Fire,' *ND* 6 (25 Oct. 1952), 674. 'Late Closing,' *DR* (17 May 1952), 10. 'Shop Workers Want "Substantial Wage Rises"', *DR* (19 April 1952), 19. 'Late Night Shopping Grows,' *DR* (3 May 1952), 23. 'Late Closing Protest Meeting in London,' *DR* (10 May 1952), 12.

⁷⁹ J. D. Hiscock, 'Shop Hours: There Must Not Be Later Closing!' *ND* 3 (16 April 1949), 236. See for example, a speech given by Padley in the House of Commons on 18 Nov. 1952: 'Shop Closing Hours: President's Speech to the House,' *ND* 6 (6 Dec. 1952), 775-777. And J. D. Hiscock, 'Shop Closing Hours: Discussions with Home Secretary on Proposals for Amending Shops Legislation,' *ND* 8 (24 April 1954), 258-259. USDAW's approach to limiting working hours was similar to that taken by the New Zealand shopworkers' unions, as distinct from the American approach (not correlated with opening hours) in the same period: Evan Roberts, 'Gender in Store: Salespeople's Working Hours and Union Organisation in New Zealand and the United States, 1930-60,' *Labour History* 83 (Nov. 2002), 107-130. Richardson offers a good summary of USDAW's political campaigns, *A Union of Many Trades*, 219-228.

provisions for shopworkers in their place of work.⁸¹ The American union campaigns beyond wages and hours focused more on bargaining conditions than working conditions per se. The key point of political activism in the RCIA and RWDSU through the long post-war period was to overturn of the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act, which had severely curtailed the range of legally acceptable union organisational and bargaining methods.⁸² The Act made it legal to pass state laws banning the union shop; it banned secondary boycotts and mass picketing; it allowed employers 'free speech' to criticise unions during NLRB certification election campaigns; and it required that all union leaders sign affidavits stating that they were not Communist Party members.⁸³ These restrictions made dismantling the Taft-Hartley Act a major goal of the post-war American labour movement.

Although the British and American shopworkers' unions faced different tactical challenges in the political arena, all were dependent on their members' loyalty to support and sustain political activism. *Fundamental loyalties* reflected in growing membership were crucial for advancing the union agenda within the labour movement and in Congress or Parliament. *Functional loyalties* were even more important, because the unions depended on their members to help build grassroots support and sympathy for their wages and hours campaigns among family, friends and even customers.

'The Member is the Union': The Politics of Union Democracy

The British and American retail unions' campaigns to mobilise consumer support in the economic and political realms and to secure legislative wage and hour regulations depended in the short term on members' *functional loyalties* expressed through good customer service and union activism. However, these efforts were part of a long-term and ideological agenda as well, insofar as labour leaders

⁸⁰ 'And Leisure for All,' *ND* 24 (22 April 1944), 129. Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 229-236.

⁸¹ 'Closing Hours of Shops: Union's Memorandum to Committee of Inquiry,' *ND* 26 (9 March 1946), 89-90. 'Observations on the Report of the Gowers Committee,' *ND* 1 (31 May 1947), 202-204, 212. Richardson, *Union of Many Trades*, 223-225.

⁸² 'A Statement of Policy,' *RWDSE* 10 (Aug. 1947), 1. 'Statement Issued by Philip Murray On Behalf of Executive Board of CIO,' *RWDSE* 10 (July 1947), 3. 'News-Let,' *RCA* 50 (Sept. 1947), 18-22. 'T-H Act Still Hamstrings RCIA Unions,' *RCA* 55 (Oct. 1952), 12.

⁸³ Goldfield, *Decline of Organized Labor*, 105-108, 182-187. Robert H. Zieger, *American Workers, American Unions* (London: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1994), 108-114. Renshaw, *American Labor*, 88-94, 115-118, 129-133.

sought to offer an alternative mode of social and economic organisation to rival the predominant mode of capitalist free enterprise. In the US the RCIA embraced a more conservative and the RWDSU a somewhat more liberal agenda focused on securing economic democracy through a combination of voluntarist agreements and state regulation. In Britain USDAW adhered to the Labour Party's supposed socialist agenda in their campaign for redistribution of wealth through state structures. In both countries labour leaders offered trade unionism as a model on which a transformation in social, economic and ideological values might take place. In turn, the legitimacy of the RCIA, RWDSU and USDAW's agendas depended on the viability of union democracy.

In America the battle for wage and working hours legislation was only part of a broader political and ideological struggle on the part of trade unions. Nelson Lichtenstein has argued that in the post-war years the combination of business activism, anti-union legislation and Cold War anti-Communism curtailed any radical tendencies in the American labour movement. These forces in turn moulded labour politics and ideology into a relatively narrow form defined by what Patrick Renshaw has termed 'consensus capitalism'.⁸⁴ The absence of any comprehensive political alternative to private capitalism in the post-war American labour movement was reflected in the RCIA from the 1930s and in the RWDSU from the late 1940s after the union rescinded its support for George Wallace's American Labor Party.⁸⁵

In summary of the AFL's political ideology, one *Retail Clerks International Advocate* article in 1940 read:

The American Federation of Labor believes in the political institutions of the United States. It has no desire to change our economic system. It believes that industry should receive a fair return for management and that fair interest should be paid on capital invested. In other words, the American Federation of Labor believes in no "ism" but Americanism.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Nelson Lichtenstein, 'From Corporatism to Collective Bargaining: Organized Labor and the Eclipse of Social Democracy in the Postwar Era,' in Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Eds.), *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1989), 122-152. Renshaw, *American Labor*.

⁸⁵ 'The Third Party,' *RWDSE* 6 (1 April 1943), 17, 23, 27; 'For an Independent Labor Party,' *Midwest Labor World* 1 (14 July 1943), 1, 3; and 'Wallace and the Third Party,' *RWDSE* 11 (April 1948), 4.

⁸⁶ I. M. Ornburn, 'Retail Clerks Important Factor in Union Label Buying,' *RCA* 44 (Nov.-Dec. 1940), 7, 11.

As this quote suggests, the strategy of the RCIA was not to draw on the ideological framework of socialism to argue for state protectionism. Rather, RCIA leaders continually couched the union's agenda for industrial democracy in nationalist rhetoric, always arguing the centrality of trade unionism to the fulfilment of America's 'democratic heritage'. The RWDSU regularly did the same. In 1940 Samuel Wolchok, President of the RWDSU, argued 'That the trade union movement is Democracy's first line of defense is true and axiomatic. To strengthen our Democracy, then, we must strengthen the organized labor movement.'⁸⁷ The RCIA and RWDSU responded to the anti-union rhetoric of employers in the public realm during the Second World War and the Cold War by continually reasserting their belief that unions were a bastion of Americanism, and that American political democracy could not survive without industrial democracy as secured through collective bargaining.⁸⁸ (See Figure 4.9.)

Beyond the ubiquitous nationalist rhetoric, the RCIA and RWDSU had specific ideological agendas in the workplace, on the domestic political front, and in the international arena of Cold War politics. The character of the unions' ideological workplace agendas was, in short, economic democracy. An editorial in the *Advocate* in 1960 described the principles of economic democracy as follows:

It means that [the worker] is making more money, probably has more leisure time because of a shorter work week, has improved vacation and holiday benefits, has health and welfare protection for himself and his family, and can look forward to a pension when his productive career is over. It means that he is protected on the job from arbitrary actions of his supervisor, and is guarded against unjust discharge.⁸⁹

Any explicit allusion to redistribution of wealth is conspicuously absent here. However, at the local level, RCIA and RWDSU leaders frequently articulated the values of economic democracy to which they subscribed when they criticised retail executives for failing to distribute profits more fairly among directors, shareholders and employees.⁹⁰ The overriding principle of economic democracy

⁸⁷ 'Wolchok,' *RWE* 3 (31 Aug. 1940), 9.

⁸⁸ 'Collective Bargaining—A National Asset,' *RCA* 65 (Dec. 1962), 6. C. C. Coulter, 'Who Will Think?' *RCA* 43 (July-Aug. 1940), 1-2. 'Federal Government Could Take a Lesson in Democracy From International Association,' *RCA* 52 (Jan. 1949), 10.

⁸⁹ 'March 1 is Independence Day,' *RCA* 63 (March 1960), 1.

⁹⁰ 'F. W. Woolworth—Millions in Profits, Starvation Wages for Clerks,' *RWDSE* 3 (29 Jan. 1940), 8-9. 'Open Letter to Marshall Field III,' *RWDSE* 4 (30 Sept. 1941).

Figure 4.9. Ridding industry of dictatorship

RCIA MEMBERSHIP:

A Buttress of Democracy



The supervisor in a nonunion store does not need a crown on his head to show that the employees in that store are denied the advantages of democracy on the job. Unorganized store workers are already aware of it. Arbitrary and dictatorial decisions by management are an ever-present hazard to them.

Seek out your fellow retail employees in unorganized stores and let them know that it is easy to make the change from dictatorship to democracy in their places of work.

Show them the example of nearly 500,000 members of the Retail Clerks International Association who have won the right to help make the rules under which they work.

Collective bargaining through a strong, dynamic union provides RCIA members with peace of mind and security about the future. They know that an arbitrary and capricious decision by a supervisor will not deprive them of their livelihood.

Unorganized retail store employees have merely to join their strength to yours, through the RCIA, and they can possess the same benefits and protections you now enjoy.

Retail Clerks International Association

AFFILIATED WITH AFL-CIO | DE SALES BUILDING | WASHINGTON, D. C. 20036

Union membership was part and parcel of American democracy for the RCIA, an ideological principle continually imparted to RCIA members. However, the viability of union principles of democracy depended greatly on members' *functional loyalties* as expressed through member recruitment and other union activities.

Retail Clerks Advocate 68 (June 1965), 34.

as embraced by the American retail unions was not absolute equality, then, but justice in the workplace and independence from the burdens of poverty imposed by poor wages.⁹¹

On the domestic and international fronts, the ideological agendas of the American unions were to extend the principles of economic democracy to all workers. In the domestic realm this would happen, the unions argued, through abolition of the Taft-Hartley Act, through government protection for collective bargaining, and through extension of New Deal state protections such as social security and public housing. In the international realm, the unions aimed to spread the American 'heritage of democracy' to workers in other countries, particularly those in so-called 'third world' countries who were considered vulnerable to Communist propaganda.⁹² To that end, in 1960 the RCIA established an International and Foreign Affairs Department 'to work for the betterment of working people throughout the free world and to meet the challenge of communist aggression directed against these peoples and their unions'. The remit of the Department was to liaise with international white collar unions, with the ICFTU and other international labour bodies, and to host visiting trade unionists from other countries.⁹³

In its domestic and international agendas, USDAW embraced a much more explicitly socialist programme. All through the Second World War, USDAW looked to the post-war period, awaiting the dawn of what its leaders hoped would be a new socialist Britain. The *New Dawn* routinely reported and embraced the Labour Party's agenda for more public ownership and national reorganisation of industry and social services.⁹⁴ During the war USDAW leaders, including long-time activist Ellen Wilkinson, warned that the poverty and malnutrition of the inter-war years would return without nationalisation of the

⁹¹ On independence through collectivism, 'Individual Freedom Through Union Membership,' *RCA* 67 (Nov. 1964), 6. Martin C. Kyne, 'Right of the Chain Store Worker to Join a Union,' *RWE* 1 (March 1938), 4, 8. C. C. Coulter, 'Social Equality Can Survive,' *RCA* 42 (Nov.-Dec. 1938), 1-2.

⁹² George Meany, 'Unity and Vigilance,' *RCA* 58 (Sept. 1955), 17. 'AFL-CIO Reaffirms Labor's Role in National and World Affairs,' *RCA* 63 (April 1960), 11. 'AFL-CIO Explores Path to World Peace and Freedom,' *RCA* 63 (June 1960), 9. 'Trade Unions Have Major Role in Building African Democracies,' *RCA* 64 (April 1961), 11.

⁹³ 'RCIA Establishes Foreign Affairs Department,' *RCA* 63 (Jan. 1960), 1.

⁹⁴ For example, 'Labour's Home Policy: A New Social Order,' *ND* 20 (25 May 1940), 244. "Let Us Face the Future: Labour's Call to the Nation,' *ND* 25 (2 June 1945), 162-164.

British economy and a comprehensive welfare system.⁹⁵ After the war USDAW retained faith in the Labour Party's assertion that it would pave the road toward economic and 'ethical socialism' both at home and abroad.⁹⁶ The union embraced the Labour's Policy Statement in 1949 which argued that 'socialism is not bread alone. Material security and sufficiency are not the final goals, they are the means to the greater end—the evolution of a people more kind, intelligent, co-operative, enterprising, and rich in culture.'⁹⁷ As opposed to the American retail unions, which emphasised the potential for individualism and freedom through trade unionism, USDAW posited collectivism in both economics and politics as the means to creating the social utopia described by the Labour Party. Furthermore, despite tensions between the British labour movement and the Labour Party in the post-war period, USDAW remained firm in its loyalty to the Party.⁹⁸

As a retail union, USDAW's ideological agenda naturally had specific implications for the retail trades. Following the Second World War USDAW supported nationalisation of many industries, but even by the late 1940s the union had not yet articulated the possibilities for nationalisation of distribution. (See Figure 4.10.) This changed in 1950 when the union submitted a document on *A Planned Distributive Economy* to its Annual Delegate Meeting, which gave the policy near unanimous support.⁹⁹ Through the early 1950s USDAW took a central role in pushing the TUC and the Labour Party toward a policy aimed 'to regulate and nationalise distributive arrangements, to restrict duplication, to eliminate wasteful practices, and to place under public ownership such parts of the distributive trades as are ready for it'.¹⁰⁰ Although this programme of

⁹⁵ For example, 'The Problems and Responsibilities of Power,' *ND* 24 (20 May 1944), 164-165, 170. 'The Opportunity is Here,' *ND* 25 (2 June 1945), 161.

⁹⁶ On the role of British unions in the Cold War, see Anthony Carew, 'The Trades Union Congress in the International Labour Movement,' in Alan Campbell, Nina Fishman, John McIlroy (Eds.), *British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics: The Post-War Compromise, 1945-64*, Vol. 1 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 145-167.

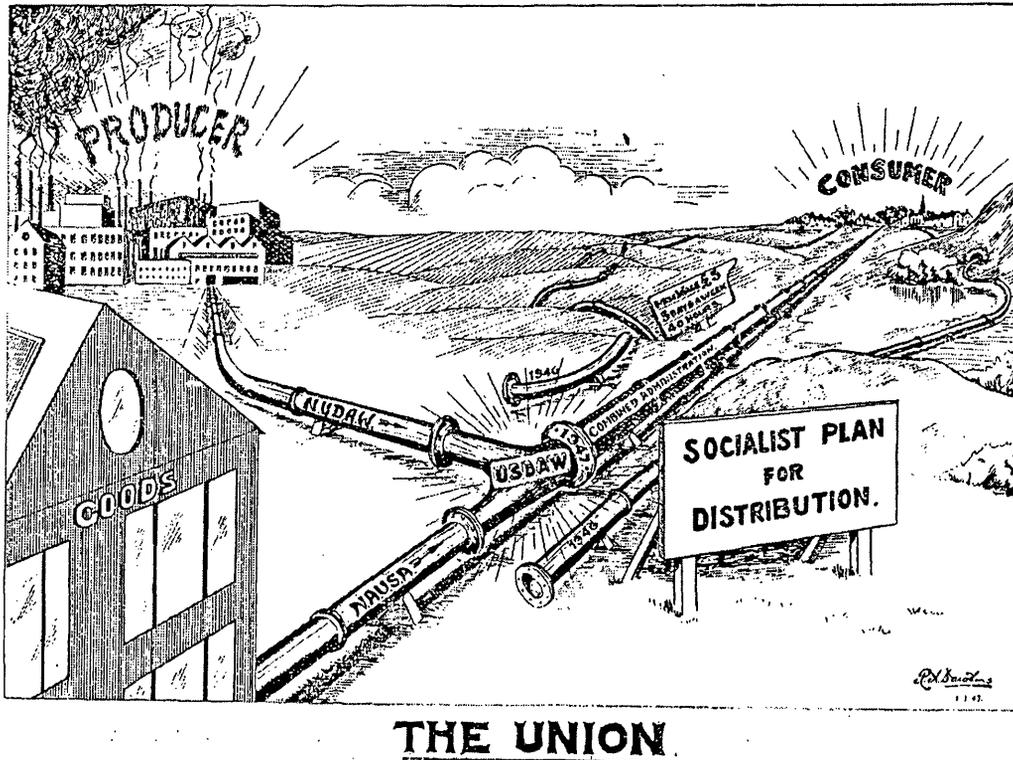
⁹⁷ Editorial, 'Our Socialist Faith,' *ND* 3 (14 May 1949), 289.

⁹⁸ On post-war union/Party tensions, see Phillips, *The Great Alliance*. Patrick Maguire, 'Labour and the Law: The Politics of British Industrial Relations, 1945-1979,' in Chris Wrigley (Ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations, 1939-1979* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1996), 44-61. David Howell, "'Shut Your Gob!": Trade Unions and the Labour Party, 1945-64,' in Campbell, Fishman, McIlroy, *British Trade Unions*, vol. 1, 117-144. Andrew Thorpe, 'The Labour Party and the Trade Unions,' in John McIlroy, Nina Fishman, Alan Campbell (Eds.), *The High Tide of Trade Unionism, 1964-79*, Vol. 2 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 133-150.

⁹⁹ Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 191-192.

¹⁰⁰ Editorial, 'The Problems of Distribution,' *ND* 6 (16 Feb. 1952), 97. 'Costs of Distribution,' *ND* 3 (1 Oct. 1949), 609.

Figure 4.10. The politics of amalgamation



Many British shopworkers' union leaders viewed the 1947 amalgamation of NUDAW, with its Co-operative production and retail society membership, and NAUSA, with its predominantly private trade retail membership, as a major step in their plan to ensure that Britain's consumer needs were met by well-paid union labour. Note that although USDAW came to support the Labour Party's plans to nationalise distribution in the early 1950s, in the late 1940s there is still no clearly defined place for the state in this 'socialist plan for distribution'.

New Dawn 1 (11 Jan. 1947), 21.

nationalisation never went very far, it was a possibility to which individual USDAW members returned through the post-war period.¹⁰¹

The challenge for the unions in both Britain and America was that in order to undermine business political propaganda and prove that trade unionism was a viable model of democracy that could be spread to other domestic and international institutions, the unions had to prove that their democracies could, in fact, function democratically. This was particularly true in America where, despite the fact that both business and unions used the rhetoric of democracy to substantiate their claims to economic and political supremacy, the unions were always the side to have to *prove* their claims to democracy in a conservative post-war political climate. In turn, the success of the American and British unions' ideological agendas both at home and abroad depended on members' *functional* and *ideological loyalties* to the union.

Union members' *functional loyalties* were important to the unions' agendas, because it was only by attending union meetings and actively participating in a union's representative systems that union democracy could be proven to be a bottom-up rather than top-down phenomenon. As the Editor of NUDAW's *New Dawn* argued in 1945:

trade union organisations depend not only for their power and influence but also for the progress which they make towards short-term and long-term objectives, on the activity and energy of an informed membership. The formulation of policy must not only have the support of the membership, but must come from them and be the expression of their desires and aspirations if any democratic movement is to go forward as a unified whole, firm in the determination to achieve that policy.¹⁰²

As democratic institutions, union leaders were morally and financially dependent on members. Members' participation in their unions' representative institutions offered the mandate union officials needed to validate their words and actions at the bargaining table and in Congress or Parliament. Members' *ideological loyalties* were important as well, if the general public were to be dissuaded from

¹⁰¹ 'The Distributive Trade and Nationalisation,' *ND* 17 (7 December 1963), 799.

¹⁰² 'The Member is the Union,' *ND* 25 (1 Dec. 1945), 369. Such arguments were common in retail union magazines. See, for example, 'Rights—And Duties,' *ND* 22 (6 June 1942); 'The Beginning—Not the End,' *ND* 24 (15 July 1944), 225; 'The First Step,' *ND* 26 (20 April 1946), 137; 'Union Membership Expands Our Democratic Heritage,' *RCA* 63 (Dec. 1960), 6; 'RCIA Convention—Showpiece of Union Democracy,' *RCA* 66 (June 1963), 6; James Suffridge, 'Democracy is Not Divisible,' *RCA* 70 (Sept. 1967), 4-5; 'Films Help Build Strong Unions,' *RCA* 63 (April 1960), 5.

believing business propaganda. As RCIA President, James Suffridge, argued in 1960, 'If unions are to achieve their rightful place in the public mind, union members must convince their friends that labor's contributions are an integral part of the strength of the nation.'¹⁰³ Just as members were to be 'ambassadors and missionaries' of the union creed to unorganised retail workers, so too did the British and American retail unions look to their members to be messengers spreading the desire for economic democracy in America and socialism in Britain to friends and family members.

Conclusion

As in retail business, retail workers' *fundamental, functional* and *ideological loyalties* to the shopworkers' unions served the unions in a variety of ways. Unions depended on their members' *fundamental loyalties* to provide the membership base on which stronger collective bargaining claims could be built. Members' *functional loyalties* were important for recruiting new members, for creating allies of consumers-as-customers and customers-as-citizens, and for supporting union political activity. *Ideological loyalties* were also important to unions' lobbying efforts with regard to wage and hour legislation, but more importantly for selling the possibilities of union democracy in general, economic democracy in America, and socialism in Britain to the voting public at home and to workers abroad. In turn, through a whole range of activities, union members could express their loyalty or disloyalty to their unions' agendas. (See Figure 4.11.) Over the course of the post-war period, both British and American retail unions developed strategies for soliciting the member loyalties on which their unions depended.

¹⁰³ 'Union Membership Expands,' 6.

Figure 4.11. A test of union loyalty

"DO'S and DON'TS"

For Loyal Union Members

**D
O**



1. Attend all Union meetings. Wear your Union button.
2. Pay dues and assessments promptly.
3. Bring in new members.
4. Take part in all your Union's affairs, vote in all its elections and know your Union.
5. Learn the voting records of state and national representatives; vote for Labor's friends in all popular elections.
6. Know your merchandise; be courteous to customers and considerate of fellow employees.
7. Report change of address promptly to local secretary and **THE ADVOCATE**.
8. Buy and sell union label merchandise and services whenever possible.
9. Know your Union agreement and your Local and International by-laws.
10. Remember it's smart to belong to the Union of your craft.
11. Be loyal to your Union, its officers and yourself.
12. Above all—don't forget **UNION** salespeople are **BETTER** salespeople.

**B
U
T**

**D
O
'
N
'
T**



1. Cross bona fide picket lines.
2. Trade with any firm or individual on the "We Do Not Patronize" list.
3. Forget union security means shorter hours and "longer" pay.
4. Accept "Straw Boss" propaganda until you investigate the motive and weigh the truth of it.
5. Vote blindly on matters that may affect your Union's welfare—your welfare.
6. Refuse to serve on Union committees.
7. Criticize your Union except on the floor of the meeting.
8. Fail to register and vote.
9. Evade picket duty when justice demands your service.
10. Conduct yourself in a manner that will reflect unfavorably on your Union.
11. Violate your Union's agreement.
12. Negotiate with your employer on a personal basis; you will only dissipate your collective bargaining strength.

This guide to member loyalty from the RCIA outlines the many ways each local and national retail union depended on the *fundamental, functional and ideological* loyalties of their members.

Retail Clerks Advocate 50 (Sept. 1947), 34.

Chapter Five

Selling Trade Unionism: The Construction and Negotiation of Union Loyalties

The British and American shopworkers' unions' efforts to solicit loyalty from retail workers at mid-century can be roughly sorted into two categories: efforts focusing on recruitment and bargaining strategy, which tended to be directed toward the individual; and social, educational and political efforts directed toward member groups. The first category of union efforts focused on soliciting and maintaining *fundamental loyalties* among both potential and existing members. In effect, union activities in this arena emphasised what the member could expect from the union through individual and collective provisions. The second category of union social, educational and political efforts were dedicated more to the construction of *functional* and *ideological loyalties* among members—loyalties meant to fortify the unions in their economic and political campaigns. These activities focused more on what the union expected of the member, and therefore aimed at providing members with the social solidarity and political strategies they needed in order to help the local or national union meet its bargaining and political goals effectively. The persistent challenge for the shopworkers' unions in both Britain and America in the mid-twentieth century was to maintain the balance between creating a sense of collective responsibility and obligation among members while adequately fulfilling individual members' utilitarian demands of union membership.

Paternalism to Fraternalism: Fundamental Union Loyalties and the Subordination of Rival Loyalties

As shopworkers' unions in both Britain and America struggled to expand and sustain their membership, they sought to nurture *fundamental* union loyalties that would protect investment in organising drives and secure long-term commitments in membership. However, just as employers attempted to subordinate rival loyalties to strengthen loyalties to employer, so the trade unions had to address shopworkers' rival loyalties to employer, class and family in order to strengthen basic commitments to union membership. The RCIA, the RWDSU, USDAW and independent unions faced two particular challenges with regard to organising department and variety store employees and subordinating conflicting loyalties.

First, the unions had to disillusion shopworkers of their supposed white collar ambitions, while subverting the ethic of rugged individualism that had long proven a barrier to organisation of the retail trade, the dry goods sector and salespeople in particular. The dramatically changing conditions of retail employment, shop floor rationalisation, and consistently low wages in department and variety stores between 1930 and 1970 would facilitate the unions' efforts in that direction to some extent.¹ In their attempts to undermine shopworkers' white collar sentiments of individualism further, union executives were not above direct appeals to 'forget you wear a white collar and admit that in the absence of a rich uncle in poor physical condition, you will undoubtedly be required to work for a living for a long time to come', as RCIA President James Suffridge advised in 1945.² For the most part, however, the major shopworkers' unions in Britain and America recognised that direct affronts to department and variety store workers' class consciousness or aspirations only exacerbated the tension between shopworkers' ostensibly middle-class identification and the traditional working-class values of the labour movement. Consequently, the unions shaped their recruitment and publicity campaigns in ways that elided class conflict and made the privileges of middle-class life—such as job promotion, home ownership and family security—contingent on union membership.

Secondly, the shopworkers' unions had to address the challenge of surreptitious employer-sponsored anti-unionism by meeting employers on their own terms. Retail employers, and department store employers in particular, had a reputation in both labour and business circles for undermining the union cause by raising wages and improving benefits just as unions began their organising drives. For example, the transformations in American retail management in the post-war years, including developments in human relations, professionalisation and promotion, were in part a response to the enormously successful union membership drives in department stores in the late 1930s and 1940s.³ As department store employers responded to attempts at unionisation with shifts in

¹ Michael Harrington, *The Retail Clerks* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1962).

² James A. Suffridge, 'YOU—Are Your Union!' *RCA* 48 (Jan.-Feb. 1945), 3-4. For an article of similar sentiment by George Bernard Shaw, see 'When I Was a Clerk. . .,' (originally written for the British Clerical and Administrative Workers Union for its retail drive) *RCA* 54 (March 1951), 3-4, 30.

managerial techniques meant to encourage loyalties to employer, the unions continually tried to find ways to capitalise on employers' efforts. One method was to shift to the union any sense of security and prestige that employers had built up among employees through programmes of professionalisation, wage incentives and welfare provisions by bringing these programmes under union contract.

Professionalisation: Constructing Loyalty in the Workplace

An important means for shopworkers' unions to consolidate their members' loyalties to union, employer and trade was to further retail employers' efforts to professionalise shop floor work. By professionalising shop work, the British and American retail unions could hope to attract more permanent employees (and potential union recruits) to the retail trade. They could also demonstrate to potential members that the trade union was not simply a manual working-class institution, but a means for advancing their interests as white collar workers. Furthermore, by bringing promotion opportunities under union contract, the local union could help to transfer from employer to union employee loyalties fuelled by interest in self-advancement.

Perhaps because of their long-term claims to craft union status, the RCIA and USDAW were particularly keen advocates for professionalisation of both dry goods and grocery work through better training and higher education in the early 1950s. In the RCIA training and professionalisation had long been part of union activity. For example, one RCIA local in Jasper, Alabama sponsored its own salesmanship course for members in 1938.⁴ By the late 1940s some RCIA locals were negotiating training objectives with department store employers.⁵ In the mid-1950s the *Retail Clerks Advocate*, journal of the RCIA, followed on in this tradition and encouraged department store retailers to institute longer-term training programmes for their employees in order to improve shop floor

³ Helen Baker and Robert R. France, *Personnel Administration and Labor Relations in Department Stores: An Analysis of Developments and Practices* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 107.

⁴ 'Association News,' *RCA* 41 (Jan.-Feb. 1938), 20.

⁵ 'J. N. Adam Officials Laud Union's Attitude While Negotiating Pact for 900 Workers,' *RCA* 50 (March 1947), 2-3.

productivity.⁶ Like the salesmanship advice offered by employers, the advice proffered by the unions emphasised the emotional labour of the job with recommendations such as 'show your appreciation', 'be a good listener', 'put yourself in the customer's shoes', and 'sell your company'. Columns in the *Advocate* and local RCIA union newsletters also offered members merchandise information and selling points for specific goods.⁷ In Britain USDAW was similarly active in the professionalisation of shop work, influencing the introduction in 1950 of the National Retail Distribution Certificate for employees in British non-food trades. The union had five representatives on the NRDC Joint Committee, including Member of Parliament and future USDAW President, W. E. Padley, and USDAW's Research Officer, T. W. Cynog-Jones.⁸

In addition to training, USDAW and the RCIA advocated heightened union involvement in employers' promotion policies, encouraging union locals to make such policies a key factor in contract negotiations. Union attempts to bring promotion policies under union contract were crucial, because the aspiration to promotion among shopworkers had long been a stumbling block for union organisers. In 1950 American retail labour relations consultant, George Kirstein, wrote that employees of department stores were often unwilling to join a union for fear it would 'endanger their standing with their boss' and limit their possibilities for promotion. Kirstein argued that, 'The candidate for promotion is a far more likely convert to employer philosophies than to the theology of unionism.'⁹ By making promotion contingent on union membership through seniority clauses, unions could attempt to undermine the shop assistant's dependence on his or her

⁶ 'Is Store Training A Horse and Buggy Operation?' *RCA* 57 (Jan. 1954), 16-18. "'Train Sales Force," Says Educator,' *RCA* 55 (Oct. 1952), 14.

⁷ 'For Your Own Good,' *Keeping Score with Local 444* 5 (April 1965), 6-7, Microform collection, SHSW. 'Know What You're Selling' column, *RCA* regularly from 49 (Dec. 1946), 8. 'Sales Sense' column, *RCA* regularly from 53 (Feb. 1950), 26. 'I Just Work Here,' *RCA* 52 (June 1949), 3-4. 'Snappy Suggestions for Salespeople,' *RCA* 41 (Sept.-Oct. 1937), 29. 'Survey Reveals Retail Salespeople Should Be More Tactful in Their Customer-Approach,' *RCA* 52 (May 1949), 14. 'Customer Satisfaction Key to Retail Selling,' *RCA* 59 (Feb. 1956), 24. 'A Store's Personality Depends on People,' *RCA* 62 (Jan. 1959), 10. 'Customers Define Top Salespersons,' *RCA* 68 (Dec. 1965), 3.

⁸ 'National Retail Distribution Certificates: Report of the Joint Committee,' *ND* 6 (21 June 1952), 391-2. 'New Junior Certificate Trade Education Course for the Retail Non-Food Trades,' *ND* 8 (19 June 1954), 387. 'The Shop Assistant and Consumer Taste: Importance of Training,' *ND* 6 (5 Jan. 1952), 13-14, 24. On USDAW's promotion of Co-operative training for members, see 'Co-operative Staff Training,' *ND* 19 (20 Nov. 1965), 739-740.

⁹ George Kirstein, *Stores and Unionism: A Study of the Growth of Unionism in Dry Goods and Department Stores* (New York: Fairchild Publications, 1950), 109.

supervisor and nurture instead *fundamental loyalties* to the union.¹⁰ (See Figure 5.1.)

Some of the basic reasons the RCIA and USDAW offered for pursuing professionalisation of the trade through training and promotion were not fundamentally different from those of employers. As long as retail employment remained low-skilled, underpaid work, not only employers but unions suffered from high labour turnover and the lack of both *fundamental* and *functional loyalties* among employee/members. In effect, an underlying drive in both employer and union efforts to professionalise retail work was to create a sense of career potential that would sustain workers' *fundamental loyalties* to the store of their employment and to retail as a career. After all, shopworkers' unions depended on their members' *fundamental loyalties* to employer to avert labour turnover and sustain union membership. Given that full-time, long-term, career-oriented employees offered the unions membership security in an otherwise volatile retail labour market and a more skilled labour force with which to bargain, the unions had to be constantly concerned 'to prevent the erosion of career opportunities' for the unions' own survival, as well as for the benefit of members.¹¹

Shopworkers' unions and department and variety store employers differed significantly with regard to other motives underlying programmes of professionalisation. In 1952, aware that 'the future [of distributive education] is being moulded now', USDAW's long-lived pioneer, P. C. Hoffman, advised that the union should insist on representation on all retail education advisory committees. His reasoning, however, went beyond basic concerns about maintenance of membership and bargaining power. At a time when Co-operative employees were arguing for direct representation on retail societies' management committees, Hoffman argued that, 'If there ever is to be workers' control of industry (which includes retail distribution) then there must be workers qualified to control.'¹² At an even more basic level, the more skilled union members were,

¹⁰ 'Promotion Policies: Selection and Training for Management,' *ND 6* (15 March 1952), 173-174. 'Targets for RCIA Negotiators,' *RCA 69* (Aug. 1966), 6. On seniority in American retail union contracts up to 1950, see Baker and France, *Personnel Administration*, 119-121.

¹¹ 'Promotion Policies,' 173-174. 'Targets for RCIA Negotiators,' 6. 'The RCIA, Young People, and Careers in Retailing,' *RCA 67* (Dec. 1964), 6.

¹² P.C. Hoffman, 'Opportunities to Serve: Education in Merchandise,' *ND 6* (16 Feb. 1952), 107-108. On employee representation in Co-operative societies, see Chapter Three.

Figure 5.1. Multiple routes to promotion



**EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
CO-OPERATIVE UNION LTD
Stanford Hall
Nr. Loughborough, Leicester**

If you are a member of a Co-operative shop staff here is an opportunity for you to start on the promotion path. New courses in Salesmanship and Management are available for study in your own home. You can begin to qualify now for such group awards as :

- CERTIFICATE IN SALESMANSHIP**
- CERTIFICATE IN DEPARTMENTAL MANAGEMENT**
- CERTIFICATE IN BRANCH MANAGEMENT**
- DIPLOMA IN CO-OPERATIVE MANAGEMENT (C.M.D.).**

Immediate entry to the Certificate in Branch Management is open to all employees over 21 years of age, including those who have not previously undertaken studies. A few hours study a week in your own home can fit you for promotion. Don't waste another moment—reach for your pen, complete this coupon, enclose it in an unsealed envelope (1½d stamp) and post to :

A coupon form with a dashed border. It has two main sections: "NAME....." and "ADDRESS.....". Below the address section, it says "Block letters please" and "N.D." in the bottom right corner. There is a starburst symbol to the left of the coupon.

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The British and American shopworkers' unions privileged seniority as the road to promotion. However, USDAW also worked with the Co-operative retail societies to promote training programmes that would allow members to acquire the skills necessary to take on managerial positions.

New Dawn 9 (27 August 1955), 533.

the more control they could exert over industrial relations, and the more likely they might be to gain the sympathy of satisfied customers. Even as the unions encouraged a consolidated loyalty to employer and union through professionalisation of the trade then, they did not necessarily sacrifice their underlying political or bargaining agendas.

There were even more fundamental differences between employer and union support for professionalisation and promotion. Retail employers sought to secure individual avenues of advancement that would encourage employees to pursue personal progress through individual distinction rather than collective bargaining. Unions, on the other hand, faced the challenge of convincing potential members that only trade union membership could fully provide and protect the 'personal dignity' and self-respect that surveys had proven department store workers valued. In so doing, the unions had to tread a fine line between appealing to potential and extant members' individual white collar career ambitions and trying to convince them 'that a man or woman brainworker is just as much a worker as one who uses his hands' and, therefore, just as much in need of collective protection.¹³ Paradoxically then, a shopworkers' union could try to improve the public image of retail work in order to recruit more loyal, long-term employees to the trade *at the same time* that it tried to convince retail workers that they risked becoming 'numbers' or 'holes in an IBM card' unless they joined the union.¹⁴ It was precisely this underlying tension that necessitated a shift in recruitment strategies for the RCIA as rationalisation of retail work increased in the 1960s.

In the 1950s RCIA national union executives had consistently argued in the *Advocate* that the salesperson held enormous importance and influence in the national economy. They also maintained that salespeople were recipients of an 'ancient heritage', the well-refined craft of salesmanship. In 1959 the union supported the Women's Bureau's career advice to young women, saying that 'retail selling is one of the most attractive careers available' with 'lots of opportunities'.¹⁵ Although the union occasionally offered similar assertions in

¹³ Frank Allaun, 'The White Collar Worker's Way Out. . . By Hand or By Brain,' *ND* 7 (5 Dec. 1953), 777-778.

¹⁴ Quote from 'A Good Union Is Known by Its Members' *RCA* 69 (Sept. 1966), 6.

¹⁵ 'Salesmanship. . . An Ancient Art,' *RCA*, 60 (Sept. 1957), 16. 'Career Advice to Girl Graduates: Retailing Offers Many Opportunities,' *RCA* 62 (May 1959), 8. See also "'Salespeople

the years that followed, researcher Michael Harrington argued in 1962 that rationalisation in retail, and in department stores particularly, had begun limiting any inherent attractiveness retail work held for the self-styled white collar worker. He hypothesised that the shift toward more manual and deskilled labour in retail was helping to denude workers of their supposed white collar superiority complexes. Harrington attributed the enormous growth of RCIA membership in the post-war years in part to this supposed shift from white collar to industrial mentality among department store and other retail workers.¹⁶

In order to meet the demands of an increasingly rationalised retail workplace, the RCIA's recruitment rhetoric shifted in the 1960s away from its long-determined focus on pride in craftsmanship to focus more exclusively on the promise of security, prestige and personal dignity to be secured through union membership. It was not so much that professionalism and prestige were deserted as organising concepts in the RCIA, but that by the late 1960s the union did not expect such desires among retail workers to be met through the job itself, or even necessarily through training and promotion. Instead, the union member could find the pride of self-determination and 'attain completeness as a personality' at the union meeting where 'every member counts as an individual'.¹⁷ This shift typified Harrington's assertion that by the 1960s the RCIA was becoming 'more industrial, more blue collar, less a craft and white-collar union' as it focused less on protecting the values inherent to the job itself and more on the personal security union membership could provide.¹⁸

Ironically, it was neither the RCIA nor USDAW—the unions purportedly most concerned about the craftsmanship and professionalisation of service employment—who protested most against the rationalisation of shop work. In the pages of the *Advocate* and *New Dawn*, RCIA and USDAW columnists lauded the progress possible with self service and computer automation. The unions' policies with regard to rationalisation were first developed in line with changes in the grocery trade, from the 1930s in the US and the 1950s in the UK. On the cusp

Are Most Vital Group in Economy"—Babson,' *RCA* 57 (June 1954), 23. 'How Important Are You?' *RCA* 58 (Feb. 1955), 16-17. 'Retail Clerks Add Value to the Goods They Sell,' *RCA* 69 (Feb. 1966), 6.

¹⁶ Harrington, *The Retail Clerks*, 1-6.

¹⁷ 'A Good Union,' 6.

¹⁸ Harrington, *The Retail Clerks*, 1-6, 12. 'Union Successes Stem from Membership Commitment,' *RCA*, 70 (Jan. 1967), 7.

of self-service expansion in British grocery provision in 1949, USDAW members expressed concern at that year's Manchester Division Conference about the potential redundancy and job devaluation incurred by self-service. The union's reply to those concerns exemplified its long-term post-war approach to the issue: 'if [self-service] has come to stay let us have our fair share in progress.'¹⁹ It was in part because USDAW welcomed self-service innovation that the Co-operatives were among the first stores in Britain to implement self-service check-out retailing in the grocery trades.²⁰

USDAW's advocates of self-service were definitively instrumentalist in their defence of the transformative shift in selling technique. Many argued that, at the least, self-service decreased shop assistants' footwork as shop mobility became the customers' responsibility. Others insisted that the net profit margin increase resulting from self-service could be passed on to employees in higher wages. One *New Dawn* columnist went so far as to argue that 'there are too many people employed in distribution' in any case. He optimistically suggested that employers could fulfil the necessary reduction in staff that made self-service worthwhile by reducing the numbers of inexperienced, under-paid 'juveniles' in the trade. So, he continued:

it does not follow that existing employees would be displaced. Even if it did, we must squarely face the fact that if wages and conditions are to benefit from self-service, a reduction in staff relative to turnover is as much in the interest of the employee as the employer, provided the former has a union to make sure that any saving is fairly divided.²¹

Even P. C. Hoffman, the closest USDAW had to a true critic of rationalisation, did not argue the case for caution in terms of redundancies or deskilling of shop work, but in terms of the housewife's need to receive advice from the shop assistant and 'enjoy a chin-wag' with her neighbours.²²

¹⁹ Quote from 'Manchester Discusses Self-Service,' *ND* 3 (25 June 1949), 373-374. 'New Systems Help Solve Check-Out Bottleneck,' *RCA* 54 (Jan. 1951), 8-9. 'Retail Automation Systems Announced,' *RCA* 69 (Feb. 1966), 7. R. Austin, 'Self-Service or Personal Service?' *ND* 7 (17 Jan. 1953), 45-46.

²⁰ On the beginnings of self-service in the Co-operative trades, see 'Self-Service Shops,' *CR* 20 (July 1946), 142-143. 'Spotlight on Self-Service,' *CR* 22 (Jan. 1948), 19. 'Self-Service is Inevitable,' *CR* 22 (June 1948), 116-117.

²¹ R. B. Davison, 'Self-Service: What Are Its Implications?' *ND* 3 (22 Jan. 1949), 68, 76.

²² P. C. Hoffman, 'Self-Service: A New Influence in Distribution,' *ND*, 4 (25 Nov. 1950), then each issue from 4 (23 Dec. 1950) through 5 (3 Feb. 1951). Even the executives of the significantly more radical union, Macy's Local I-S, including Vice Presidents Phil Hoffstein and Bill Atkinson, fell back on the argument that if automation were to go ahead, workers should at least

While the RCIA was more cautiously critical of self-service and automation, its overall response was also one of conciliation, accepting that automation in the broader American economy provided higher standards of living for workers as consumers. The union recommended joint studies by unions and management to seek improved wages and service through appropriate integration of automation and self-service. When the RCIA was critical of automation, it was less a matter of protecting craft or professionalism than job security.²³ On the whole, the RCIA and USDAW's general lack of clear-cut opposition to rationalisation reflected a deep ambivalence about self-service and automation within the unions. During the post-war years department and variety store employers struggled to find the right balance of professionalisation and rationalisation to maintain employee loyalties, as discussed in Chapter Three. So too did the RCIA and USDAW struggle to determine a consistent policy that would protect the respectability of retail work while protecting the routes to higher productivity that could lead to higher wages—both necessary preconditions of *fundamental* union loyalties in the retail trades.

While the RCIA and USDAW sought to consolidate shopworkers' *fundamental loyalties* to the union by supporting retail employers' efforts at professionalisation of the trade, it was the militant Macy's Local 1-S in New York City that most vigorously resisted in practice the deskilling and redundancy caused by automation. The local union could do little directly to stop Macy's management from implementing self-service, but used bargaining sessions to gain protection for union members displaced through self-service, including replacement in similarly skilled jobs, re-training, and severance pay. Local 1-S's responses to rationalisation by speed-up and machine were even more direct. In 1949 and 1950 union executives encouraged salespeople to resist speed-up on the shop floor caused by understaffing, by insisting on serving only one customer at a time. In 1955, when Macy's attempted to implement a self-bussing programme in the staff cafeteria that would have displaced nine workers with automatic

benefit from the increased profits. Hoffstein and Atkinson, 'Talking Shop,' *L1-SN* 7 (15 Feb. 1961), 3.

²³ The ambivalence of the RCIA toward automation was clear in President James Suffridge's address to the Joint Economic Committee of Congress in January 1958: 'Congress Hears Suffridge Speak on Future of Automation,' *RCA* 61 (Jan. 1958), 7. 'Union-Management Study Can Resolve Mutual Problems,' *RCA* 66 (April 1963), 6. 'Myths About Automation Hamper Proper Planning for the Future,' *RCA* 66 (Nov. 1963), 4.

conveyor belts, the union called on its members to refuse to bus their own dinner trays. In 1958, when Macy's management again pursued labour savings in the cafeteria with the introduction of vending machines, the union called on members to 'starve the vending machines' and so protect union jobs. And, in 1959 when the mail opening, mail order, typist, correspondence and adjustment sections faced a speed-up based on job evaluation by an outside company, the employees in those departments voted to do 'an honest day's work' without overtime or speed-up. (See Figure 5.2.)

Local 1-S's campaigns of direct action met with varied success. The self-bussing lasted only until those displaced by the conveyor belts had been given other work in the store. The 'starve the machines' campaign successfully ended in the removal of the food vending machines. The short-term outcomes of the administrative office and sales floor actions are not clear. What is clear, however, is that the union could at times successfully draw on the loyalty of its members to mobilise direct opposition to several managerial initiatives involving automation and rationalisation. The Macy's union's call to preserve jobs and status in department stores through direct action was not directly compatible with loyalties to employer as were the RCIA's and USDAW's more conciliatory policies. Instead, Local 1-S put loyalties to employer and union at odds in the confrontational style of Macy's notoriously hostile labour relations.²⁴

Macy's confrontational style was not atypical of the RWDSU's and New York City independent department store locals' bargaining strategies. In the early post-war years the British and American retail unions demonstrated two approaches to professionalisation and skill-protection in the retail trades. While the more craft-oriented RCIA and USDAW focused their efforts on working with employers to improve training provisions and promotions policies for

²⁴ 'Self-Service,' *LI-SN* 5 (15 Sept. 1953), 3. 'Macy Rules Trap Unwary Workers,' *LI-SN* 1 (Oct. 1949), 1, 2. 'Our Secret Weapon,' *LI-SN*, 1 (19 June 1950), 3. 'Union Protects Workers as Macy Acts to Mechanize the Cafeteria,' *LI-SN* 6 (1 June 1955), 4. 'Unity Wins Fight for Cafeteria's Workers,' *LI-SN* 7 (15 Sept. 1955), 1. 'Board Urges Membership to Starve New Vending Machines and Save Jobs,' *LI-SN* 9 (July 1958), 2. 'Canteen Machines Removed; Union Protests Proven Right,' *LI-SN* 10 (15 Oct. 1958), 2. '14th Floor Speed-Up,' *LI-SN* 10 (June 1959), 4. Sam Kovenetsky (1-S President), 'Macy's Hints Plans For Further Speed-UP,' *LI-SN*, 10 (1 Dec. 1959), 1, 3. Sam Kovenetsky, 'N.Y.C. Automation Conference Urges Aid to Displaced Workers, Sharing of Profits,' *LI-SN* 6 (1 Dec. 1960), 1-3. On other Local 1-S direct action campaigns, see 'Arbiter's Speed-Up Award Can Be Vetoed by Workers,' *LI-SN* 4 (15 Feb. 1953), 3; 'Union Fights Speed-Up Intimidation,' *LI-SN* 5 (1 Dec. 1953), 1; 'Workers Stop Efficiency Plan of Macy,' *LI-SN* 5 (1 March 1954), 2.

Figure 5.2. Local 1-S addresses Christmas speed-up



This image was consistent with Macy's Local 1-S's regular critiques of and hostility toward speed-up on and off the sales floor.

Local 1-S News 5 (15 Dec. 1953), 3.

employees/members, the more industrial RWDSU—and Macy's Local 1-S in particular—took a more militant approach to protecting job integrity for their members. It is difficult to determine whether one approach was more appealing to potential union members than another. However, the case of professionalisation exemplifies what were significant differences in union style between the more conservative RCIA and USDAW on the one hand, and the more radical RWDSU and New York independent unions on the other. Where the former two unions used more conciliatory methods to advance the material and economic interests of their white collar members, the latter routinely used more militant practices to protect the respectability and professionalism of department store labour.

Instrumentalism: The worker as family member and consumer

Regardless of changes in the ways retail unions used professionalisation, prestige and self-respect as organising concepts, one thing remained constant: the instrumentalist appeal for workers to improve their own and their families' living standards through union membership. In the 'Affluent Worker' studies of the late 1960s, British sociologist John Goldthorpe and his colleagues defined 'instrumental collectivism' as unionism 'directed to the achievement of individuals' private goals, outside the workplace'.²⁵ Although Goldthorpe treated this as a relatively new phenomenon, other historians have demonstrated that the British and American industrial unions had long built their membership appeals on the basis of workers' instrumentalist wage and hours demands.²⁶ Similarly, from the late nineteenth century the British and American shopworkers' unions recognised that their potential members' desires for higher wages, shorter hours and more fringe benefits could be the basis for successful recruitment campaigns.²⁷ This was still very much the case in the mid-twentieth century.

As the retail labour force in both America and Britain became increasingly female, increasingly part-time, and increasingly dominated by young students

²⁵ John Goldthorpe et al., *The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), quote from p. 106.

²⁶ Lawrence B. Glickman, *A Living Wage: American Workers and the Making of Consumer Society* (London: Cornell University Press, 1997). For further critique of the Affluent Worker Study, see Paul James Kemeny, 'The Affluent Worker Project: Some Criticisms and a Derivative Study,' *Sociological Review* 20 (Aug. 1972), 373-389.

²⁷ Sir William Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades: The History of USDAW* (Manchester: USDAW, c. 1979). P. C. Hoffman, *They Also Serve: The Story of the Shop Worker* (London: Porcupine Press, 1949). Harrington, *Retail Clerks*, 6-7.

from the 1940s, the unions were continually reminded that appeals to their members' craft consciousness would not be sufficient to recruit and sustain membership. Through a continually renewed emphasis on higher wages, shorter hours and personal security, shopworkers' unions attempted to consolidate workers' loyalties to family and union by making the worker and his or her family's standard of living contingent on union membership.²⁸ Furthermore, in the post-war years the American retail unions came to realise that they could capitalise on the compounded family/employer loyalties that store directors had solicited through health and welfare plans by bringing those plans under union contract.

In 1944 the RCIA actively promoted 'instrumental unionism' among its extant and potential members, as it encouraged them to 'consider the Retail Clerks International Protective Association an investment and, yourself as a prospective investor'. According to the union, the investment of dues and a bit of time devoted to union activities would reap the rewards of financial security and self-respect.²⁹ Through the *Advocate* the Retail Clerks continually fostered a utilitarian approach to union membership by reporting local unions' legal successes in securing financial compensation for members slighted by employers. By the mid-1950s these reports, detailing the exact amounts won by each individual member, accompanied by photos of the happy recipients with cheque in hand, were routinely printed under the headline 'It Doesn't COST—It PAYS to Belong to the RCIA!'³⁰ In a department store organising campaign of 1949, RCIA Local 1100 of San Francisco published leaflets that measured in dollars and cents the local department store employee's wages against the cost of living, and the exact profits to be made from union wage contracts and commission hikes. The basic appeal to the individual in this typical campaign was to 'Play it safe. Protect yourself and your job.'³¹ The RCIA's general recruitment strategy for white collar department store workers was not to call on traditions of working-class idealism, but to appeal directly to the individual purse. (See Figure 5.3.)

²⁸ On the politics of the family wage in the American labour movement, see Glickman, *A Living Wage*.

²⁹ 'A Future for Retail Clerks,' *RCIA* 47 (July-Aug. 1944), 3-7.

³⁰ 'It Doesn't COST—It PAYS to Belong to the RCIA!' *RCA* 56 (Aug. 1953), 2.

³¹ 'Do Your Pamphlets "Fall Flat on Their Face?"' *RCA* 52 (Aug. 1949), 8-10.

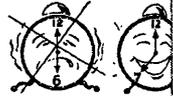
Figure 5.3. The capitalism of trade unionism

a
LITTLE
investment



gives **BIG** dividends

BETTER WAGES


SHORTER HOURS


PAID VACATIONS


HEALTH -- WELFARE


SICK LEAVES


SECURITY


RETAIL CLERKS
International Association
AFFILIATED WITH THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR
LEVERING BLDG. LAFAYETTE, IND.

Retail Clerks Advocate 54 (Nov. 1951), back cover.

Beyond individual security, the RCIA's recruitment campaigns were distinctly family oriented. A statement by International President, James Suffridge, in 1945 exemplified this family orientation. He argued that 'wages determine the kind of house the worker and his family live in, the kind of clothing the family will wear and the amount of education the worker's children shall receive.'³² The worker, in Suffridge's mind, was not the part-time female employee already typical of the retail labour market, but the male breadwinner, responsible for a family, home ownership and his children's (presumably private) education. The breadwinner focus of the union's organising drives was clear in two of the union's major publicity campaigns. The 1948 'Unionism Around the Clock' campaign told the story, in comic book style, of Jim, who worked in a grocery store, and Mary, who worked long hours for little pay in a variety store. When Mary fell ill from exhaustion and lost her job, Jim finally sought out the security of a union contract, which allowed him to pay the bills, buy a home, and provide security for their new child.³³

Only two years later, the Retail Clerks' 1950 organisational film, 'A Watch for Joe', demonstrated a more complex understanding of the union's potential membership base. In this film, the female love interest, Linda, was a widowed mother with a young child to care for. Linda was already a member of the union and enjoyed the benefits provided by collective bargaining, including vacations and sick leave. Joe, on the other hand, was the stubborn-minded son of a small businessman, who valued his independence and refused to join the shopworkers' union. However, when Joe and Linda decided they wished to marry, Joe had to re-evaluate his position vis-à-vis the union, telling Linda, 'I don't want to come to you as a guy who is earning less than you do.' Linda took the opportunity to challenge Joe's unwavering loyalty to his employer. 'The biggest reward you can ever expect from employers like your Mr. Jordan is a gold watch after twenty years of underpaid drudgery,' she argued. 'He might even throw in a free meal at a company dinner to make you feel more important—and to keep you or the others from remembering that he's made handsome profits by appealing to your loyalty, or making you afraid instead of paying you what you're worth.' Linda and Joe's union friend, Tom, eventually convinced Joe that the

³² James A. Suffridge, 'Salespeople on the March!' *RCA* 48 (March-April 1945), 3-4.

³³ RCIA, *Be Wise—Organize: Unionism Around the Clock* (Lafayette, IN: RCIA, 1948), 7-11.

union was not just for women and the working-classes, but for an upwardly-mobile breadwinner like himself as well. It is significant that the film portrayed the union as the safe haven of single mothers and women with financial responsibilities. However, the main subject of the film was nevertheless the male breadwinner on whom the union relied for long-term membership.³⁴ This film epitomised the RCIA's general recruitment technique in the post-war years, which was to suggest to potential members that the union contract was as essential to respectable middle-class family life as the deed to a house.³⁵ (See Figure 5.4.)

The RWDSU was instrumentalist in its recruitment drives as well. From its beginnings in 1937 the RWDSU (originally the United Retail Employees of America) was an industrial union. As such, it focused less on creating or maintaining the intrinsic value of retail work, and more on securing direct financial rewards for members. The main concern of the union's first Congress in Pittsburgh was to secure for shopworkers 'a chance for the leisure, the companionship with one's family, a decent wage and an eight-hour day'. These were issues not so much concerned with members' direct experiences of their work, but focusing instead on the individual extrinsic rewards to be gained from union membership.³⁶

An image from the *Retail Employee* in the spring of 1938 conveyed the RWDSU's underlying beliefs about its potential recruits quite clearly. A female 'Retail Employee' on the street admires a department store display window that showcases the well-groomed, respectable unionised women employees of Frank & Seder, Hearn's, Gimbels, Macy's, Woolworth and Whelan. The recruit here was not a salesperson behind a counter, identifying closely with her job, but a consumer of images, concerned with the fashionable clothing and refined lifestyle she could cultivate with the security offered her by union membership.³⁷ (See Figure 5.5.)

The appeal to consumer power was indeed a significant selling point of union membership in the RWDSU's recruitment campaigns. One poem to that

³⁴ RCIA Collection, M95-242, Box 1, Folders 1-8 (esp. script in Folder 6 and 'Retail Clerks Film—"A Watch for Joe"—Makes Big Hit at Label League Meeting,' *Federation News* 64 (March 1952) in Folder 5), SHSW. For more family-oriented RCIA campaigns, see 'RCIA Members Lead Fuller Lives,' *RCA* 60 (June 1957), 34.

³⁵ As explicitly stated by one RCIA local administrator: 'Your Union Contract, A Valued Possession,' *1428 Message* 4 (Feb. 1959), 1, SHSW.

³⁶ 'All Eyes on Pittsburgh,' *Retail Employee* 1 (1 Nov. 1937), 4.

Figure 5.4. Union membership: Key to the American family dream



Self help is a basic American principle. The sturdy reliance of workers upon each other is a high expression of this tradition. Applied through trade unions it has brought our wage earners the highest wages and best working conditions known in the world.

But these gains came only through their organized activity. Future gains can only stem from the same source.

Every member of the Retail Clerks International Association must put these basic principles into practice if his union is to remain strong. A good way to do your share is to act as a volunteer organizer. Tell every unorganized retail store clerk about the advantages of membership in the RCIA. Encourage them to join the only union in the United States and Canada exclusively devoted to the welfare of retail store employees.

Adding their strength to that of the 400,000 present RCIA members will guarantee a better life for both old and new members of the International Association.

The RCIA's post-war recruitment campaigns offered collectivism—rather than the business ideal of American individualism—as the route to middle-class family lifestyles.

Retail Clerks Advocate 65 (June 1962), 34.

Figure 5.5. Shopping for security



The Spring Season Brings the Urge to Enjoy the Benefits of CIO Organization

Retail Employee 1 (15 April 1938), 1.

effect listed all of the consumer goods retail workers might handle in a single day.

It lamented:

These are the things we handle all day,
Things we can't buy on our meager pay
We have to be skilled in putting them over
While buyers and supers are living in clover.

We mark, and we pack, and we make out sales slips,
For the merchandise bought on nice buying trips.
We are the store—in the customers' mind,
But the most we expect is a kick from behind.

We're getting tired of the tough deal we get.
But now in our Union, we're almost all set.
For our Union is growing much stronger each day
To make jobs more secure and get us more pay!³⁸

The potential for shopworkers to 'borrow prestige' from their intimate relationships with the fancy merchandise and wealthy customers they met with at work made it more difficult for the retail unions to convince salespeople they needed collective protection.³⁹ By appealing to potential members' consumer desires, the RWDSU hoped to convince recruits that their personal prestige came not from handling luxury goods, but from owning such goods themselves. The goal was not to encourage potential members to join the union by making them feel more working-class, but to make the trade union the route to middle class affluence and security.

There is much less evidence available regarding USDAW's recruitment campaigns. However, the recruitment posters reproduced in the *New Dawn* suggest that the main British shopworkers' union's appeals to members were similarly instrumentalist with a focus on wages, working hours and security. (See Figure 5.6.) In recruitment and bargaining campaigns, USDAW routinely pinned its appeals to potential members on promises to secure higher wages and shorter hours simultaneously, as in its £5, 5-day, 40-hour week campaign of 1947.⁴⁰ The advantages of this approach were twofold. First, by focusing on a sustained or slightly elevated wage for a shorter work week, USDAW could circumvent the

³⁷ *Retail Employee* 1 (15 April 1938), 1.

³⁸ 'Lament,' *RWDSE* 3 (29 April 1940), 8.

³⁹ On 'borrowing prestige', see C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1956), 172-174.

Figure 5.6. Instrumentalism at work



New Dawn 6 (Aug. 1952), 484.

legal and political snares set by national wage restraint policies under both Labour and Conservative governments in post-war Britain. Secondly, British retail employers commonly offered employees the choice between higher wages and shorter working hours in purportedly progressive agendas meant to secure loyalties from their employees.⁴¹ By combining higher wages with shorter hours in bargaining demands, USDAW tried to convince members and potential recruits that the choice between wages and hours was a false one and that they could, in fact, have both through union membership.⁴²

For both the British and American retail unions, personal security went beyond higher wages, shorter working hours and better living conditions. From the interwar years in Britain USDAW helped to secure contributory pensions schemes through Co-operative retail societies for the majority of its membership employed in the Co-operative trades.⁴³ In the post-war years the RCIA and RWDSU pursued a similar policy, constantly trying to secure a higher contribution toward pension schemes from employers to lower the contribution required from members.⁴⁴ In America, where social security developed on a different trajectory, the shopworkers' unions went even further, seeking to provide health and welfare benefits through union contract rather than state provision.

The RWDSU was the pioneer in contract health and welfare benefits for unionised department store employees in America. While USDAW and the RCIA were arguing for national health care, Samuel Wolchok, President of the RWDSU, was arguing that until the government legislated national coverage, workers would look to their trade unions to provide security against misfortune. In 1943 Wolchok pioneered the Trade Union Accident and Health Association, which was to provide hospitalisation, medical/surgical coverage and maternity care funded through employer and employee contributions. Wolchok claimed that this was the first policy in the nation to determine employee or member contributions

⁴⁰ Richardson, *Union of Many Trades*, 201. 'The £5 Minimum and the 5-Day 40-Hour Week,' *ND* 1 (25 Jan. 1947), 36-37. 'In Our Own Hands,' *ND* 1 (8 Feb. 1947), 49.

⁴¹ As at the John Lewis Partnership in 1961. 'Increased Leisure,' *GJLP* 42 (14 Jan. 1961), 1171.

⁴² On the history of employers' wage/hour trade-offs, see Gary Cross, *Time and Money: The Making of Consumer Culture* (London: Routledge, 1993).

⁴³ Richardson, *Union of Many Trades*, 117-119.

⁴⁴ 'Filene's To Pay Employees' Pensions,' *RCA* 56 (March 1953), 8. The RCIA created its first pension plan for union employees (as compared to members) in 1949. 'Retail Clerks International Association Retirement Plan for Employees,' *RCA* 52 (Feb. 1949), 29-32.

according to weekly income, without discriminating in fees or benefits according to race, age or gender.⁴⁵

The RWDSU was also party to the first *fully* employer-financed hospitalisation and medical/surgical coverage negotiations in department stores, secured in the 1947 contract between RWDSU Local 9 and Wanamaker's department store in New York.⁴⁶ Like other industrial unions, the RWDSU realised during the war and early post-war years that contracted welfare benefits were an important way for the union to improve the personal security of their members without breaching wage regulations.⁴⁷ By mid-1947 the union's Executive Board was advising other locals to bargain for employer-funded, union-administrated benefit programmes offering life insurance, retirement insurance and health insurance, including maternity benefits and full coverage for dependents.⁴⁸ Later that year the RCIA announced its own programme to bargain for employer-financed, union-administered health-welfare coverage on the East Coast. An *Advocate* article describing the new programme in New York City—doubtless meant to be a rival to the RWDSU's strong New York coverage—was accompanied by a photo showing a queue of exclusively middle-aged female members waiting to subscribe to the new Welfare Fund.⁴⁹

As that photo suggested, health and welfare programmes administered by the union were another means for the American unions to consolidate both women's and men's loyalties to the union by providing security for members' families. The provisions covering dependents and maternity care were only the most obvious concessions in this direction. As an RWDSU Research Department staff member argued in 1948, the newly created employer-financed, union-administered health and welfare plans meant that benefits cheques could be sent directly from the union office to the member's home. The advantage to the union was clear: 'These checks, coming to the family during a period of distress, help to

⁴⁵ 'URWDSEA Pioneers in Union Health Insurance,' *RWDSE* 6 (1 June 1943).

⁴⁶ Baker and France, *Personnel Administration*, 121-122.

⁴⁷ The RCIA did the same with vacation plans, 'Vacations With Pay Now Accepted Fact But Sick-Leave Provisions Gain Slowly,' *RCIA* 49 (Sept-Oct. 1945), 22-23.

⁴⁸ 'Inclusion of Welfare Plans in Contracts Urged by RWDSU Executive Board,' *RWDSE* 10 (April 1947), 3. 'RWDSU Urges Locals Set Up Welfare Plans,' *RWDSE* 16 (Feb. 1952), 6.

⁴⁹ 'New York Locals Expand Union Benefits To Members Through Health-Welfare Plan,' *RCA* 50 (June 1947), 3-4. Such programmes were common in RCIA locals by the late 1950s. 'Health Insurance an Important RCIA Benefit,' *RCA* 61 (April 1958), 4.

identify the union as a source of protection and strength. It creates a stronger bond between the union and its members.⁵⁰

Health care was not the only provision offered members' families by the American trade unions. In a paternalist style not unique to the Macy's union, Local 1-S promised to help members with 'personal problems, difficulties with in-laws, legal problems, child guidance problems and the like'.⁵¹ In 1957 the RCIA national union and many of its locals began offering university scholarships to members and their children in what would become an RCIA annual event.⁵² Just as retail employers sought to reaffirm loyalties to employer by providing benefits to the employee's family, so the union sought to make the employee's family lifestyle contingent on union membership.

The British and American shopworkers' unions succeeded in co-opting employers' own techniques for recruiting loyalty when they secured personal and family benefits for members on the basis of union membership. Leading up to the Second World War, the retail unions were immensely critical of the family rhetoric and paternalist programmes deployed by retail employers to secure loyalties from their employees. The RCIA recruitment film, 'A Watch for Joe', described above, exemplified the constancy of that sentiment in the late 1940s.⁵³ However, in a study of RCIA local unions, Michael Harrington argued that by the early 1960s the instrumentalist benefits provided through the unions had come to constitute conditional 'benevolent union paternalism' rather than democratically secured collective provision.⁵⁴ Like incentives offered by employers that promised increases in benefits relative to length of service in order to encourage constancy of employment, so similar provisions in wages, promotions and benefits systems administered by the unions made personal and family security dependent on long-term employment and continued union membership.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Gloria Belkin, 'Union Health, Welfare Plans,' *RWDSE* 11 (Jan. 1948), 8, 25.

⁵¹ '1-S Membership Gets Best All-Round Protection For Self and Family,' *LI-SN* 5 (15 April 1954), 3.

⁵² 'James A. Suffridge Scholarship Fund Established,' *RCA* 60 (Dec. 1957), 5-6.

⁵³ C. C. Coulter, 'Variety Store Victories,' *RCIA* 41 (Sept.-Oct. 1937), 1-4. Joseph Franco, 'Desire for Security makes Unionization of Salespeople in Retail Trade Inevitable,' *RCA* 51 (Jan. 1948), 14.

⁵⁴ Harrington, *The Retail Clerks*, 86.

⁵⁵ 'Good Standing Key to All Union Benefits,' *LI-SN* 4 (1 Oct. 1952), 4. Contract provisions as reported regularly in the *RCA*, the *RWDSE*, and the *ND*.

The retail unions can be credited with standardising employer provisions in unionised stores and securing for their members financial and material benefits that were previously dependent on the benevolence of employers. However, it was only when the unions campaigned for material provision through the state, as with minimum wage regulations in the US and National Health Service provisions in Britain, that personal security was explicitly recognised as a right for all, rather than a privilege exchanged for employer or union loyalty.

* * *

Union members' *fundamental loyalties* underpinned the day-to-day activities of the British and American shopworkers' unions by offering the unions stability through continuous membership. Union administrators' efforts to solicit these loyalties by promising personal material security in return for union membership would appear on their own to constitute a limited and conservative approach to trade union organisation. However, the instrumentalist nature of members' *fundamental loyalties* to their unions was precisely what allowed the shopworkers' unions' executives to build up *functional loyalties* among members by fuelling an ethic of reciprocity to which union leaders could appeal.

Not optimistic about human nature or the likelihood that members would willingly and altruistically sacrifice themselves for the common good, British and American shopworkers' union leaders often based their campaigns for members' *functional loyalties* on instrumentalist appeals to action. Whether the logic was that duty and responsibility to the collective body of trade unionists followed on from material security provided by the union, or that 'The more you put into your Union, like a bank, the more you will get out of it', the appeal for members to contribute to the fulfilment of union goals was often itself instrumentalist.⁵⁶ The main difference between instrumentalism with regard to *fundamental* and *functional loyalties* was that whereas the solicitation of *fundamental loyalties* focused on the individual as a worker, consumer and family member, construction of *functional loyalties* continually situated the individual member in a community of other trade unionists.

⁵⁶ Michael Thomas, 'Desire and Content: Working for Democracy,' *ND* 7 (12 Sept. 1953), 587-588.

Blood Banks, Boycotts, and Ballot Clubs: Creating Functional Loyalties

The more the life of the individual member is tied up with the union, and the greater the degree of solidarity that the members feel, the stronger the union is.

--Martin C. Kyne, Executive Secretary, RWDSU, 1947⁵⁷

The *fundamental loyalties* to union that maintained the membership rolls—and provided union dues in turn, sustained the basic bargaining and organising activities of British and American shopworkers' unions. However, the nature of collective bargaining and the broader political contexts of the British and American labour movements in the mid-twentieth century necessitated more than *fundamental loyalties* from members. At the bargaining table, local union negotiators depended on their members to support the union's position, and to back it up when necessary through strikes, picketing, or other forms of direct action. Shopworkers' unions depended on their members as well to promote union membership among the unorganised retail labour force, both inside and outside their stores of employment.

On the political front, unions looked to their members for the lobbying strength necessary to protect and advance legislation affecting basic organising and bargaining activities. In America, organised labour faced the onslaught of newly reorganised and revitalised business activists in the post-war years, who were lobbying to limit union rights and advance the political security of business in Washington. The 1947 Taft-Hartley Act and the long-term exclusion of retail employees from the Fair Labor Standards Act threatened the RCIA's and the RWDSU's attempts to provide the basic wage and benefits protection that underlay their members' instrumentalist *fundamental loyalties*. USDAW were concerned as well with the instrumentalist necessity of securing shop hours legislation and fair Wages Council minima through the post-war years.

The extent to which retail unions in the US and UK could provide the basic privileges of collective bargaining (such as higher wages, shorter hours, holidays, job security, etc.) depended not on dues alone, but on the *functional loyalties* of their members. Such loyalties could be expressed through regular attendance at union meetings, participation in basic bargaining activities, or involvement in unions' political or membership organising drives. Importantly, these *functional loyalties* did not evolve spontaneously from union membership,

but had to be actively cultivated by seasoned members and administrators at the local level, and by bureaucracies of union representatives at national levels. The maturation of members' *functional loyalties* and the success with which unions solicited these loyalties depended on two major criteria: the development of a sense of community and solidarity with other workers, both within the retail sector and without; and education in the organisational, bargaining, and political goals of the local and international union. Shopworkers' unions were well aware of these two key factors and therefore continually combined social and political activities to nurture *functional loyalties* among members.

Leisure and socialisation

Leisure activities and social clubs organised through the local branch enabled retail unions to nurture both *fundamental* and *functional loyalties* among their members in the early post-war years. Although it is difficult to gauge the extent of union social activities among shopworkers before the Second World War, anecdotal evidence suggests that the unions increased their efforts to organise leisure activities for their members in the post-war years. As department and variety store workers in both union and non-union stores benefited from gradual reductions in weekly working hours, leaders of the major shopworkers' unions worried that a simultaneous expansion in mass leisure and mass media would monopolise members' leisure time to the detriment of union solidarity. For example, in 1953 USDAW specifically protested against the commercialisation of British television for fear that advertising and corporate sponsorship would infuse British culture with 'lack of taste and lack of dignity'.⁵⁸ The unions' fear, it seemed, was that mass leisure would undermine the social values cultivated through traditions of 'respectable' working-class leisure.⁵⁹ While theme parks, cinemas, television and automobile travel encouraged family-centred or home-

⁵⁷ Martin C. Kyne, 'Leadership Training,' *RWDSE* 10 (Sept. 1947), 8.

⁵⁸ 'The Dangers of Commercial TV,' *ND* 7 (4 July 1953), 417. 'This Business of Pleasure,' *ND* 6 (8 Nov. 1952), 705. A. W. Hewitt, 'How Can Labour Use Leisure?' *ND* 3 (28 May 1949), 335.

⁵⁹ For surveys of 'respectable' and other working-class leisure activities in Britain and America, see Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985). Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours For What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983). John Benson, *The Rise of Consumer Society in Britain, 1880-1980* (London: Longman, 1994). W. W. Knox, *Industrial Nation: Work, Culture and Society in Scotland, 1800 - Present* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1999).

based consumption of the leisure industry's goods and services, the shopworkers' unions continually attempted to provide alternative union-focused, community-based venues for individual members and their families to pass their leisure time constructively.

Many of the social activities sponsored by local branches of the major shopworkers' unions were not unlike those sponsored by department store employers. Indeed, such activities were often a conscious attempt on the part of union organisers to rival employer-organised activities in competition for the loyalties of youth in particular.⁶⁰ In both Britain and America unions organised sports teams; group outings to museums, concerts and the countryside; drama groups; talent shows; member orchestras; picnics; beauty contests; and similar activities based on the collective talents and interests of members.⁶¹ At the most basic level such activities provided members with the opportunity to form friendships that would bolster *fundamental* and *functional loyalties* to the union and provide the basis for future organisation. As a representative of RCIA Pomona, California Local 1428 argued, 'We have done our level best not only to make members feel that they are important as employees and as union members, but that they have friends who care about them.'⁶² The union-sponsored leisure activities that encouraged such sentiment of friendship also provided union representatives with advantages not dissimilar to the benefits employers reaped from store-sponsored activities. For example, the union dance and dinner allowed union administrators the opportunity to emphasise the family-like or fraternal atmosphere of the occasion, and to reward members' long-term basic loyalties with token gifts and certificates, reinforcing and rewarding *fundamental loyalties* to the union.⁶³

Union-sponsored leisure activities and clubs also promised shopworkers' unions the opportunity to build up a reserve of family sympathy for the union that

⁶⁰ E. J. Milne, 'Labour and Leisure: How to Strengthen the Workers' Movement,' *ND* 24 (16 Dec. 1944), 403, 411.

⁶¹ 'Association News' in each *RCIA*. 'Branch Affairs,' column in the *ND*. '1-S Sports' in each issue of *LI-SN*. 'Activities,' *LI-SN* 1 (25 April 1950), 4. 'Drama Group Presents "Our Town"', *LI-SN* 2 (15 Oct. 1950), 2. *RCIA* locals were particular fans of the beauty contest, for example, 'Celebrate Saturday Closings,' *RCA* 56 (Oct. 1953), 29.

⁶² 'Local1428—Pomona: A Concern for the Individual,' *RCA* 73 (Nov. 1970), 8-11.

⁶³ 'Social and Propaganda Events,' *ND* 20 (30 March 1940), 163. 'Successful Social at Pendleton,' *ND* 20 (27 April 1940), 203. 'Membership Emblems Presented at Dinner,' *1428 Message* 14 (July 1969), 2-3.

could be tapped when branch meetings and picketing campaigns imposed on family time. At picnics and union cultural activities, the families of union members could meet each other and, it was hoped, realise their common plight and shared interests. Children could be 'raised in the surroundings of the Union', a band of young recruits to sustain the future labour movement.⁶⁴ (See Figure 5.7.) In addition to group social activities, the shopworkers' unions appealed to members' families on an individual basis as well. In 1943 Samuel Wolchok, President of the RWDSU, accepted administrative responsibility for a new 100-acre residential recreational holiday destination in rural New York, only 35 miles from New York City and the bulk of the union's membership. The 'vacation colony' was run on a co-operative basis, offering collective provisions, and the opportunity for individual members to buy on instalment a quarter-acre of land. On this land they could build summer homes and vacation annually in the vicinity of other union members.⁶⁵ Through collective provision USDAW also provided its members and their families with reduced fare holidays in a respectable working-class atmosphere at 'Socialist' holiday resorts.⁶⁶

Macy's Local 1-S was most unusual in its attempt to gain the loyalties of union members' families with a joint company/union-sponsored blood bank. The bank received donations of blood from union members and store executives, which could then be used by union members, their husbands, wives or children, store executives, even parents of single members and retired Macy's workers. Although the extent to which blood transfusions to union members' loved ones translated into long-term support for the union is impossible to measure, family members routinely wrote letters to the *Local 1-S News* expressing their gratitude to the union for the blood they received.⁶⁷

Beyond the family, the local community was also an important audience for the shopworkers' unions' collective leisure activities. When properly organised, branch social activities could bolster the local union's public relations while improving member morale. For example, RCIA's San Francisco

⁶⁴ Milne, 'Labour and Leisure,' 403.

⁶⁵ 'URWDSEA Establishes One Hundred-Acre Cooperative Vacation Colony,' *RWDSE* 6 (1 July 1943), 5.

⁶⁶ 'Clarion Guest House' advertisement, *ND* 25 (7 April 1945), 109.

⁶⁷ Letters to the Editor section, *L1-SN*. See also, 'Blood Bank Needs Minimum of 3000 Volunteers To Guarantee Continued Coverage Through 1957,' *L1-SN* 8 (1 May 1957), 1, 3.

Figure 5.7. USDAW family outing



Members of the USDAW Selfridges branch with their families, headed to the 1965 Annual Delegate Meeting. This is one of the few sources offering a glimpse of the racial diversity of British department stores in the 1960s.

New Dawn 19 (22 May 1965), 350.

Department Store Local 1100 was one of the first AFL unions to organise a women's drill team when the team was established in 1941. The team provided a social venue for its female members, and helped publicise the union in local parades. (See Figure 5.8.) Similarly, the construction of American Labor Day parade floats, including one in 1947 adorned by scantily-clad RCIA 'bathing beauties' from Stockton, California Local 197, provided both male and female members the opportunity to spend their leisure time with other members while publicising the local union.⁶⁸ (See Figure 5.9.) In Britain, May Day parades served a similar function, where members and their family members could celebrate in the streets together, with recruitment advertisements and political posters in hand.⁶⁹

The American retail unions also engaged their local communities directly through sponsorship of Boy Scout troops, Little League baseball teams, community blood banks, labour testimonials in schools, and charity fundraisers. These activities were part of a broader post-war effort on the part of the AFL-CIO to raise public 'awareness of the union member's place in the community as a citizen, taxpayer, consumer, parent' and to encourage members' 'acceptance of the responsibilities of citizenship and the greater participation in community affairs'. The AFL-CIO, at the convention immediately following reunification in 1955, established a 'Community Services Committee' to encourage direct union involvement in local communities. The RCIA followed this precedent by founding a Department of Community Relations in 1963 for the national union, and similar committees at the local level to co-ordinate community service.⁷⁰

For its part, USDAW favoured more directly political forms of union engagement with local communities. For example, the national union encouraged local branches to follow the lead of two Worksop branches which initiated a 'Joint Fraternal Committee for the purpose of promoting social activity between the two branches' in 1941. By 1944 the two branches claimed that social activity had

Saturday-onlies and retired workers were brought under the plan in 1962, 'Seek Record Participation in 1962 Blood Bank Drive,' *L1-SN* 8 (1 May 1962), 1, 4.

⁶⁸ 'Local No. 1100, San Francisco, Cal., Drill Team,' *RCIA* 44 (March-April 1941), 14-15.

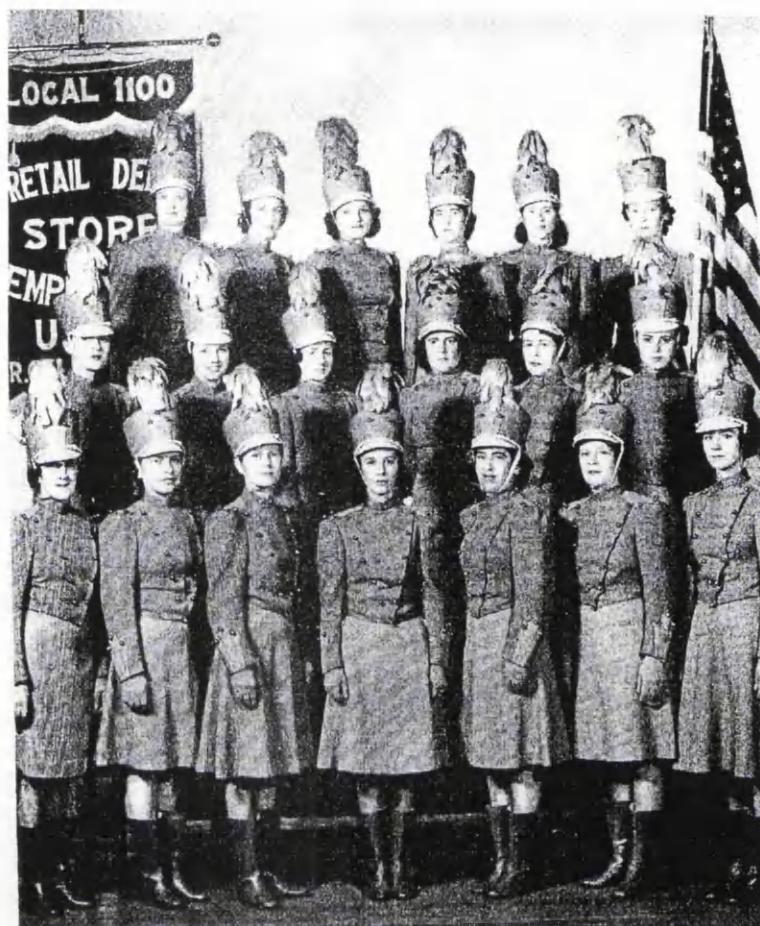
'Stockton, California, Local 197 Has Unique Labor Day Parade Float,' *RCA* 50 (Nov. 1947), 19.

⁶⁹ 'Moving Ahead With Labour,' *ND* 19 (22 May 1965), 343.

⁷⁰ 'Labor is a Good Neighbor,' *RCA* 61 (April 1958), 10, 26. 'Union Membership Makes Your Life Better,' *RCA* 64 (May 1961), 6. 'A Word From Your Community Activities and Public Affairs Department. . .' *Retail Store Employees Local 444*, 1 (Nov.-Dec. 1967), 2, SHSW.

'Community Relations—An Opportunity for Service,' *RCA* 66 (Sept. 1963), 6.

Figure 5.8. RCIA Local 1100 San Francisco drill team



Retail Clerks International Advocate 44 (March – April 1941), 14.

Figure 5.9. RCIA Local 197's Labor Day parade



Retail Clerks Advocate 50 (Nov. 1947), 19.

increased, and as a result the branches found more willing ambassadors for the union to send as representatives to the local Trades Council, local Labour Party committees, and local business and labour councils.⁷¹ In 1953, one *New Dawn* columnist encouraged USDAW members to serve their communities and unions directly by running for election to local councils. The main point here was to encourage community service among members, but the possibility that as councillors USDAW members could influence local political decisions, including shop closing hours, was also emphasised.⁷² Generally in both the US and the UK union-organised community service activities did not simply foster member loyalty and union pride. They also allowed unions to counter the often hostile public image of organised labour by demonstrating the civic mindedness of local unions and their members.⁷³

Local union social activities were often infused—either implicitly or explicitly—with political, social and cultural agendas. In the late 1940s USDAW became particularly concerned to ensure ‘that some of the increased leisure is used with social purpose to the benefit of the whole community’. In this connection, the Editor of *New Dawn* emphasised ‘the adequate utilisation of leisure, a utilisation that will bring in its train wider appreciation of the art of living, of responsible citizenship with a well-developed communal sense’.⁷⁴ The sorts of leisure activities encouraged by the union were those meant to foster ‘comradeship and friendship’ among young members in particular, such as cycling, walking, camping and sailing. Consequently, USDAW’s 1949 Annual Delegate Meeting (ADM) encouraged local branches to develop social and recreational activities directed at young members, in order to foster a sense of civic responsibility and cultural respectability among members.⁷⁵

Beyond local branch activities, in Britain NUDAW and later USDAW looked to the TUC and what they hoped would be a new socialist state to provide

⁷¹ ‘How It Can Be Done!’ *ND* 24 (16 Dec. 1944), 409.

⁷² Arthur Maddison, ‘My Lord Mayor... Shaping Communal Life,’ *ND* 7 (6 June 1953), 359-360.

⁷³ On the politics of public relations through community service in the post-war American labour movement, see Elizabeth A. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-60* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 158-186.

⁷⁴ Quotes from ‘Days of Leisure,’ *ND* 3 (9 July 1949), 417, and ‘Design for Leisure,’ *ND* 26 (29 June 1946), 225.

⁷⁵ ‘Leisure and Pleasure,’ *ND* 3 (11 June 1949), 353. From the Second World War, USDAW was aware of its central role in appealing to youth in the labour movement. ‘Accent on Youth,’ *ND* 23 (3 July 1943), 209.

a network of constructive leisure activities for workers that could rival the expanding capitalist leisure industries. To that effect, NUDAW's ADM in 1946 passed a resolution 'asking the T.U.C. to establish cultural centres in all the big towns, these centres to be run on a big scale, embracing sports, education, and halls big enough for dancing, lectures, or films'. 'By so doing,' the resolution concluded, 'we can educate our youth and adults to be real trade unionists and responsible citizens.'⁷⁶ For USDAW branches social activities were not simply social gatherings; they were also an opportunity to educate members in the basic principles and goals of Socialism and trade unionism. The politicisation of USDAW leisure and cultural activities in the post-war years followed on from a long tradition of reformist (rather than revolutionary) socialist alternative leisure in Britain from late nineteenth century.⁷⁷

Of course, the most functional social activities for the unions were those associated with the local branch meeting or recruitment campaigns. Through the post-war years, both the British and American national shopworkers' unions routinely reminded their members that attendance at branch meetings was a duty to be fulfilled in return for the privileges of the union contract.⁷⁸ However, there was growing concern among union administrators in both Britain and America about the difficulty of making branch meetings attractive to members. In 1948, the *New Dawn*'s editor advised that, 'In making branch meetings attractive the social aspects ought not to be ignored, not to produce a "tea-party" atmosphere, but to cater for the "off-duty" comradeship which can do so much to cement friendships.'⁷⁹ With similar sentiment, many social activities in both British and American branches were scheduled to coincide with the branch meeting.⁸⁰ As

⁷⁶ 'Report of Proceedings at the Twenty-Sixth Annual Delegate Meeting,' 1946, USDAW Library, Manchester.

⁷⁷ Hewitt, 'How Can Labour Use Leisure?' 335. 'Towards a New Life,' *ND* 2 (21 Aug. 1948), 385. For more on the distinction between reformist and revolutionary socialist sub-cultures, see Douglas Allen, "'Culture" and the Scottish Labour Movement,' *Scottish Labour History Society* 14 (May 1980), 30-39.

⁷⁸ Such articles were routine, but the following are a sample: 'Why Union Membership?' *Keeping Score with Local 444* 1 (Oct.-Nov. 1949), 2, SHSW Microform. 'New Members,' *L1401AN* (July 1941), 2, SHSW Microform. 'Concerning the Duty and Responsibility of a Member to the Local Union,' *RCIA* 47 (March-April 1944), 16-17. 'Our Obligation,' *ND* 1 (29 Nov. 1947), 457. 'Every Member an Active One,' *ND* 1 (14 June 1947), 213.

⁷⁹ 'Membership Leakage,' *ND* 2 (24 July 1948), 337.

⁸⁰ News of branch activities in each issue of the *New Dawn* and *RCIA*.

incentive for attending meetings, several RCIA locals even awarded door prizes.⁸¹ It was also common for both the American and British unions to organise social activities such as free concerts, fashion shows and competitions explicitly for the purpose of recruiting new members.⁸² In this way, the social activities that helped to build up the interpersonal loyalty and solidarity on which union economic and political campaigns rested could also be directly functional.

Organised leisure and social activities helped the local and national retail unions to create and sustain member loyalties. Such activities promised to provide members with 'a sense of belonging' that would help them build up friendships across trades and stores within the union, making exit less desirable and sustained membership more likely if one transferred to another store.⁸³ Union social activities in the public realm displayed retail union members as responsible citizens, fostering an image of trade unions as public-minded civic institutions to rival the less favourable image of unions common in the national press and political debate in the post-war years. Many social activities provided unions with the opportunity to inculcate their members with the ideals and values of trade unionism without recourse to explicit propaganda. Above all else, collective activity helped to build up the spirit of camaraderie and teamwork necessary to the success of more strategic economic and political union activities.⁸⁴

Strikes and boycotts

There were few trade union social activities as infused with political meaning and propaganda potential as the local strike. As with industrial trade unions, the strike was an important event for local and national retail unions, particularly as a last-ditch bargaining effort meant to capitalise on the retail employer's vulnerability to public opinion and lost business. However, the official strike, and later the boycott, also allowed unions the opportunity to employ and solidify members' *functional loyalties* and to encourage a sense of camaraderie and solidarity among members with common grievances against employers.

⁸¹ 'Membership Meeting,' *L1401AN* (June 1960), 1. 'Attend Meetings,' *Keeping Score with Local* 444 5 (Jan. 1965), 4.

⁸² 'Fashion Display with a Difference,' *ND* 16 (6 Jan. 1962), 24. One USDAW member accused the Executive Council of resorting to 'a mild form of bribery' when they used such activities as recruitment forums. 'Letter to the Editor,' *ND* 1 (6 Sept. 1947), 351.

⁸³ 'A Concern for the Individual,' 10.

In his study of the New York City Klein's and Orbach's department store strikes of 1934-5, Daniel Opler argued that the strike was not simply an industrial affair, but cultural performance for all involved: employers, union members and customers alike.⁸⁵ The effective performance of the picket line, the sit-down strike, or the co-ordinated subversive activity of salespeople on the shop floor allowed the local union and its most loyal members to set out publicly the union's demands and principles, not only for employers and customers, but for potential members as well. The picket line allowed union members a very public avenue for expression of voice, where employees could openly and creatively vent their frustrations with employers. (See Figure 5.10.) In turn, the performance itself provided an opportunity for union members to reaffirm their unity and social solidarity in service to the main principles of trade unionism, particularly during strikes with large turnouts, as during the 1953 Macy's strike over wages and pension plans where 5000 members took to the street.⁸⁶

The successful strike, more than any other single union activity, proved that collective sacrifice brought collective betterment. Such was the case with many of the department and variety store strikes across America that activated dramatic retail union growth in the late 1930s.⁸⁷ When properly organised, the strike also provided the national union the opportunity to build up the solidarity needed to contend with the economic power of national chains. To that end, all three of the major British and American retail unions diligently reported and sometimes organised co-ordinated strikes at chain store branches such as Montgomery Wards, Sears, Woolworths and House of Frasers, in order to foster a sense of identification among members in geographically disparate areas based on shared work experience.⁸⁸ (See Figure 5.11.)

⁸⁴ 'The New Trend And Our Policy,' *RCA* 51 (Dec. 1948), 13-14. 'Teamwork Wins,' *RCA* 72 (Jan. 1969), 34.

⁸⁵ Daniel Opler, 'Monkey Business in Union Square: A Cultural Analysis of the Klein's-Orbach's Strikes of 1934-5,' *Journal of Social History* 36 (2002), 149-164.

⁸⁶ 'We Win,' *LI-SN* 4:18 (May 1953). See also 'Next to the Labor Day Parades it was the Greatest Labor Demonstration in New York!' *LI-SN* 12 (1 April 1961), 3-4.

⁸⁷ Kirstein, *Stores and Unionism*, 63-74.

⁸⁸ For example, 'America's Most American City,' *RCIA* 41 (Nov.-Dec. 1937), 1-5. 'Woolworth Unfair to Labor in Missoula,' *RCIA* 43 (Nov.-Dec. 1939), 6-7. 'Ward Strikers Tell Story of Walk-Out,' *RCIA* 44 (Jan.-Feb. 1941), 7-9. 'Countrywide Action Initiated Against Wards,' *RCA* 61 (Feb. 1958), 1, 10. 'An Appeal,' *RWDSE* 6 (1 Dec. 1943), 2. 'Woolworth's Dispute,' *ND* 15 (9 Dec. 1961), 771-772. 'Shopworkers Mean Business! Union's House of Fraser Campaign Launched,' *ND* 19 (13 March 1965), 162-164. 'House of Fraser Campaign in the North-East,' *ND* 19 (17 July 1965), 456. Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 275-276.

Figure 5.10. The strike as performance



Members of RCIA Local 64 animatedly protested working conditions at Livingston's department store in Louisville, Kentucky.
Retails Clerks International Advocate 45 (Sept. – Oct. 1941), 19.

Figure 5.11. National solidarity

MONTGOMERY WARD WORKERS ON THE MARCH



Montgomery Ward's was a consistent target of the RWDSU in its campaigns to build a national membership base and national solidarity among American shopworkers.

The Retail and Wholesale Employee 3 (31 May 1940), 16.

The RCIA, RWDSU and USDAW used the strike to different degrees. In the late 1930s, the RWDSU and New York City independent locals were most militant, using the strike strategically to build momentum in organising and bargaining campaigns.⁸⁹ The RCIA and USDAW also saw much of their more militant strike activity before the Second World War, although they were more reluctant to strike than the RWDSU.⁹⁰ However, as all of the retail unions became more established and moved toward more conciliatory bargaining practices in the 1950s, the strike increasingly became an instrument of the last resort. The RCIA and RWDSU shied away from long, expensive strike campaigns in the less hospitable legal climate of the post-war years in America. With the move toward national agreements in Britain, USDAW agreed to arbitration in place of strikes.⁹¹ It was not until the 1960s, when USDAW re-directed its attention to the private trades, that the national union and its local branches resurrected the strike weapon.⁹²

The decreased use of the official strike by the retail unions in Britain and America in the 1950s reflected the broader tendencies in British and American trade unionism in that period.⁹³ Although the strike offered an opportunity to unite union members behind a common cause, it could also expose fissures in solidarity. A strong union like Macy's Local 1-S could try to foster a sense of in-group solidarity by publicly ridiculing those who broke ranks and betrayed union loyalties by crossing the picket line.⁹⁴ However, most local retail unions in Britain and America could little afford that sort of explicit test of their membership, particularly in most department and variety stores where unions were often trying during strikes to recruit among sympathetic non-union staff. The strike could be demoralising, with employers and unions vying for what, in such crisis, seemed to be mutually exclusive loyalties, and individual employees

⁸⁹ Kirstein, *Stores and Unionism*, 63-74.

⁹⁰ Kirstein, *Stores and Unionism*, 41-54. Richardson, *Union of Many Trades*. Coulter, 'Variety Store Victories,' 1-4.

⁹¹ Robert E. L. Knight, 'Unionism Among Retail Clerks in Postwar Britain,' *Industrial & Labor Relations Review* 14 (July 1961), 515-527, p. 523.

⁹² Richardson, *Union of Many Trades*, 274-277.

⁹³ Alan Campbell, Nina Fishman, John McIlroy, 'The Post-War Compromise: Mapping Industrial Politics, 1945-64,' in Alan Campbell, Nina Fishman, John McIlroy (Eds.), *British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics: The Post-War Compromise, 1945-64* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 97, 105. Patrick Renshaw, *American Labor and Consensus Capitalism, 1935-1990* (Jackson, Mississippi: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1991), 133.

⁹⁴ 'Expelled: Roll of Dishonor,' and 'Executive Board Ousts Scabs,' *L1-SN* 4 (1 July 1953), 1-2.

cajoling each other to join either the pro-employer or pro-union group, as during the New York City Woolworth's strike of 1937.⁹⁵ Moreover, the relatively unskilled labour in which most shopworkers engaged meant that they had little economic power with which to bargain.⁹⁶ Indeed, department and variety store employers could, and often did, employ strike-breakers with little effort, as in the Macy's-owned LaSalle & Koch department store in Toledo, Ohio in 1959.⁹⁷ Above all else, the unsuccessful strike could jeopardise hard-won gains and carefully nurtured relationships with more progressive employers, endangering the fragile union loyalties of more instrumentalist, or at least less militant, union members.

Weighing the advantages of the strike against its disadvantages, in the post-war years, the American RCIA unions started to make more frequent use of the consumer boycott. The boycott, and mobilisation of both members' and non-members' consumer strength, had long been a centrepiece of RCIA bargaining power, mainly through use of the Store Card and Service Button. From the 1890s these decals symbolised union-friendly working conditions to labour-conscious customers.⁹⁸ (See Figure 5.12.) In the post-war years the RCIA extended their boycott initiative when the leadership realised more fully that the boycott picket line offered many of the same opportunities as the strike in terms of fostering local and national union solidarity, without the same risk to members' jobs or non-members' potential loyalties. A picket line could be set up on a regular basis

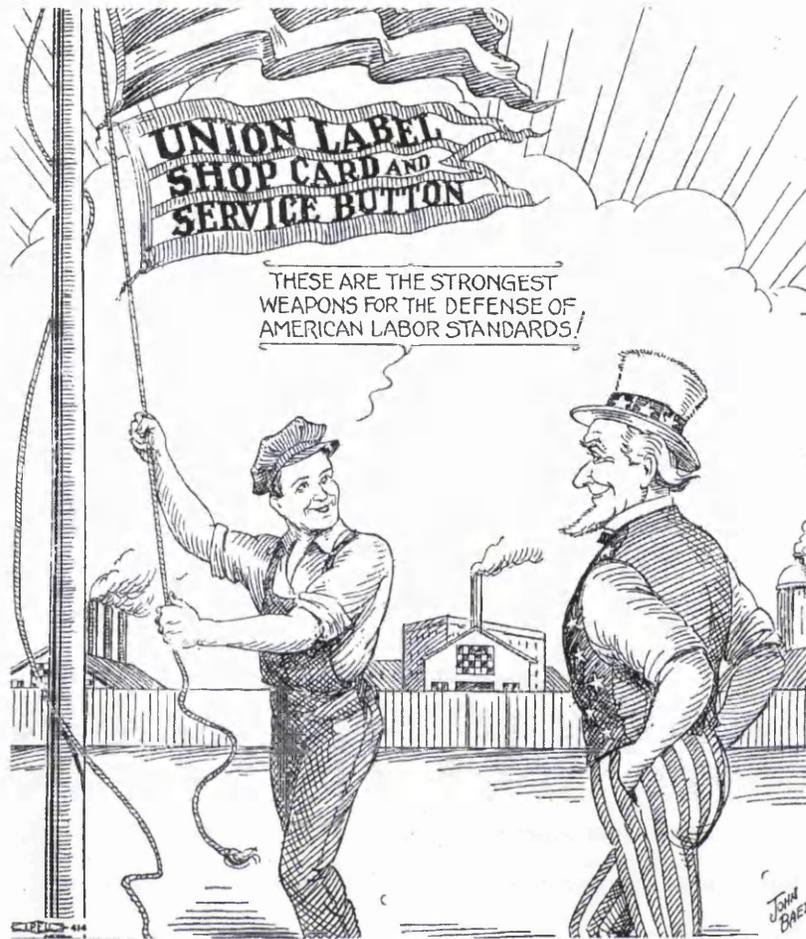
⁹⁵ Kirstein, *Stores and Unionism*, 66-70, 117.

⁹⁶ Marten S. Estey, 'The Strategic Alliance as a Factor in Union Growth,' *Industrial & Labor Relations Review* 9 (Oct. 1955), 44-45.

⁹⁷ 'Macy Customers All Over U. S. Asked to Help Toledo Strikers,' *RCA* 62 (Jan. 1959), 1. For more on the significance and problems of the strike in union affairs, see Richard Hyman, *Strikes* (Glasgow: William Collins Sons, 1972).

⁹⁸ 'America and the Union Label,' *RCIA* 45 (Sept.-Oct. 1941), 4-6. 'You've Got Something There Brothers: Buy, Sell, Talk Union Label Merchandise,' *RCIA* 41 (Sept.-Oct. 1937), 16-17. The Union Label and Store Card campaigns continued at least through the 1960s: 'An Open Letter to All Employers Having Contracts With RCIA Local Unions,' *RCA* 63 (Aug. 1960), 4. The RCIA's consumer label campaigns were part of a broader campaign on the part of American trade unionists and middle-class women sympathisers to transform labour relations through consumption at the turn of the twentieth century. Glickman, *A Living Wage*, 95-98, 108-128; Kathryn Kish Sklar, 'The Consumers' White Label Campaign of the National Consumers' League, 1898-1918,' in Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern and Matthias Judd (Eds.), *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 17-35. USDAW considered implementing a union store sign campaign to create demand for union shopworkers in 1948, but not much seemed to come of it. W. J. Davies, 'Shop Where You See This Sign,' *ND* 2 (10 July 1948), 319, 323.

Figure 5.12. Consumer power: The driving wedge



The flip side of the boycott—used to sanction employers unfriendly to unions—was the union label and shop card, used by the RCIA from the late 19th century to create demand for union goods and services. As this image suggests, these provided the consumer base for the American economic democracy the unions sought to create.

Retail Clerks International Advocate 44 (July – Aug. 1941), 24.

without ever calling members out on strike, and without depleting union resources in the process.

In the 1950s and '60s, the national boycott became the RCIA's signature strategy for countering the economic strength of national chains and fostering a sense of national solidarity among employees of the same chain store business in many cities. The RCIA's longest boycott against Sears started in 1960 to protest against the firing of workers who refused to cross a Machinist Union picket line in San Francisco and to protest against Sears' other anti-union tactics across the country. The international boycott lasted for seven years, longer than any strike could have, and highlighted international solidarity in the process. By refusing to shop in a Sears store in Boston, the loyal RCIA member could express his or her solidarity with the campaigns of union colleagues at Sears stores in San Francisco.⁹⁹ Even more dramatically, when the white collar workers of Lima, Peru, Sao Paulo, Brazil, and other South American cities refused to shop at their local Sears stores, the boycott became a means for fostering international loyalties among workers of the same company in different countries.¹⁰⁰ (See Figure 5.13.) Although the boycott proved successful for the RCIA in some instances, there is little evidence to suggest that the RWDSU or USDAW ever picked up on the national boycott as a means for challenging national chain stores.

The theoretical relationship between union member loyalty and the strike or boycott is a circular one. It was probably rare that the process of industrial action in itself would initiate new union loyalties from non-members, although the eventual success of such action might have. Rather, the successful performance of the strike or boycott depended on the deployment of extant *functional loyalties* from those members most sympathetic with the demands being made, or most loyal to the union as a bargaining agent. In effect, the function of the strike or boycott was not necessarily to initiate new loyalties, but simultaneously to deploy and reinvigorate existing ones.

⁹⁹ Harrington, *The Retail Clerks*, 40-41. 'RCIA National Chain Store Committee Votes Nationwide Boycott of Sears Roebuck & Co.,' *RCA* 63 (Aug. 1960), 6-7. 'The Consumer Boycott of Sears, Roebuck and Company,' in 'Press Releases (1960-1962)' folder 7, Box 2, RCIA files, M95-242, SHSW. 'Help Wanted on Montgomery Ward,' *The 1428 Message* 1 (Aug. 1956), 1, SHSW.

¹⁰⁰ 'Labor Intensifies Protest Against Sears Firings,' *RCA* 63 (Oct. 1960), 3. 'Labor in the Americas Protests Sears Participation in International Trade Fair,' *RCA* 64 (Oct. 1961), 5.

Figure 5.13. Boycott: A family affair



One RCIA Local business agent enlisted his young daughter to help spread the Sears boycott message through their local neighbourhood, demonstrating one of the many ways in which family members participated in trade union activities.

Retail Clerks Advocate 64 (May 1961), 5.

Education and Political Action

If many of the shopworkers' unions' social activities were implicitly political, union education programmes were explicitly so. The educational activities and publications sponsored by the RCIA, RWDSU, USDAW, independent unions and local branches were invariably infused with the social and political agendas of their creators. Whether such programmes offered education in basic trade union principles, details of recent contracts, or talking points on contemporary legislation, the basic aims were the same: to encourage sympathy toward the union's immediate and long-term goals, from the bargaining table to the floor of Parliament or Congress; and to provide members with the intellectual tools required to help fulfil those union goals.

There were both continuities and changes in the education of trade union members in Britain and America during the mid-twentieth century. On the one hand, educating the rank and file about union goals had long been central to the grassroots organising pursued in branch meetings and leisure activities. Such informal education continued to be an important basis for union education through the post-war years, as evidenced by the shopworkers' unions' dependence on organisers, shop stewards and long-term union members to convey information to their colleagues. At the same time, the American and British labour movements became increasingly interested in developing more organised educational programmes and professional teaching methods that could heighten member interest in the mechanisms and ambitions of those movements. The result was a two-tiered educational programme, with the grassroots interpersonal education targeting rank and file and unorganised shopworkers, and the formal taught courses appealing more to union administrators and long-term members.

In 1931, the Workers Education Bureau in the US set up the first American Labor Institute through Rutgers University in New Jersey as a venue for the formal education of rank and file and union administrators. The dramatic growth in unionism in the 1930s led other publicly- and privately-funded American universities to follow suit, creating a number of formal degree programmes covering everything from English to public speaking and labour law.¹⁰¹ In Britain in the inter-war years, the TUC, the National Council of Labour

¹⁰¹ 'Workers' Education and the University,' *RCA* 50 (Nov. 1946), 20-21. 'Workers' Education: What? Why? How?' *RCA* 49 (Dec. 1946), 26.

Colleges (NCLC) and the Co-operative Union held week-long summer schools and correspondence courses for member education. USDAW assisted members in pursuing such education from 1923 and continued to do so in the post-war years.¹⁰²

As the shopworkers' unions became increasingly bureaucratic during their rapid mid-twentieth century expansion, however, the local and national administrative positions involved with industrial relations in retail became increasingly specialised and professionalised in both Britain and America. This specialisation necessitated industry-specific, and even union-specific training, which, at least in Britain, the TUC and other national education programmes were not adequately providing.¹⁰³ Consequently, the shopworkers' unions in both Britain and America initiated their own formal and informal education programmes to meet their own training needs for organisers, negotiators, shop stewards and union activists.

As early as 1942 the RWDSU encouraged its member unions to organise summer or week-end institutes offering instruction in union and industry-specific issues in addition to their on-going grassroots, leisure-oriented educational activities. At that time union locals in New England, St. Louis and Detroit had already initiated joint educational committees, providing facilities, libraries and classes for members.¹⁰⁴ By at least the early 1950s, the RCIA national union organised Educational Conferences for delegates from local branches.¹⁰⁵ In the 1960s the RCIA began organising its own national and regional week-long schools for officers and union staff. University lecturers specialising in various fields related to industrial relations and labour law were invited to speak to participants at these schools.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Richardson, *Union of Many Trades*, 95-96, 135-136. 'Summer Schools, 1943,' *ND* 23 (27 March 1943), 98. For attendees' carefully selected positive reactions to these summer schools, see 'Summer School Impressions,' *ND* 24 (9 Sept. 1944), 293-295. 'Proposed Education Scheme for the Union's Members,' *ND* 2 (16 Oct. 1948), 492-493. For a schedule of TUC training courses, see 'T.U.C. Training College,' *ND* 11 (6 April 1957), 201-203.

¹⁰³ John McIlroy, 'Making Trade Unionists: The Politics of Pedagogy, 1945-79,' in Campbell, Fishman, McIlroy (Eds.), *British Trade Unions*, 37-65.

¹⁰⁴ 'Educational Programs Thrive in Many Locals as URWDSEA Marks Anniversary,' *RWDSE* 5 (18 May 1942), 10, 30.

¹⁰⁵ '1953—International Organizing and Educational Conference,' *RCA* 56 (May 1954), 3, 5-8.

¹⁰⁶ 'Officers and Staff Attend Week-Long School,' *RCA* 63 (Jan. 1960), 4-5. 'School Bells Ring Again for Local Officials in Southern and Southeastern Divisions,' *RCA* 64 (Aug. 1961), 8-9.

Other American unions had similar education programmes for their members, as demonstrated by

In Britain, USDAW offered similar encouragement to its local branches in the years just following the Second World War. Frustrated with the pace of TUC-organised educational committees catering to its member unions, USDAW pushed ahead with its own educational scheme in its 1949 annual meeting. This scheme allowed for allocation from member dues for 'a Union educational fund'; affiliation to the National Council of Labour Colleges, the Workers' Educational Association, and the Workers' Educational Trade Union Committee to facilitate member use of those institutions' programmes; and organisation of national and local USDAW summer and week-end schools with scholarships. In 1958, USDAW disaffiliated from the NCLC and appointed its own full-time Education Officer to oversee further development and specialisation of the union's educational scheme.¹⁰⁷ This shift from institutional to union-directed education programmes in USDAW was part of the broader decentralisation of education in the British labour movement in the 1950s and '60s.¹⁰⁸

The range of educational programmes offered shopworkers by the British and American labour movements at mid-century served three main purposes: to convey contract information; to impart a sense of history and member solidarity; and to guide workplace and political activism. Each of these education goals encouraged in some way the development of members' *functional loyalties* toward their unions. First, grassroots educational activity served to inform members of the basic principles of unionism and the details of local union contracts. These contracts—and the bargaining processes leading to their formalisation—formed the basis of union claims to industrial democracy. The union could not rightfully claim to represent its members' interests democratically unless members were acquainted with the union's activities at the negotiating table. Furthermore, members' willingness to fight for further protection of their rights under contract depended on their familiarity with the privileges and obligations set out in the contract, and with the principles and goals of unionism.

a British *New Dawn* article about the American International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union in America: Frank G. Moxley, 'Trade Union Education in America,' *ND* 5 (26 May 1951), 329-330.

¹⁰⁷ Richardson, *Union of Many Trades*, 213-214, 245-247, 370-371. 'Proposed Education Scheme,' 492-493. 'Report of Proceedings at the Third Annual Delegate Meeting,' 1949, 68, USDAW Library. For a report of the union's first summer school in 1950, see 'The Union's Summer School,' *ND* 4 (11 Nov. 1950), 691-693. USDAW first passed a resolution encouraging expansion of organised educational activities at its 1947 ADM, but originally put the onus on the TUC, 'First Annual Delegate Meeting,' (1947), 67-68, USDAW Library.

¹⁰⁸ McIlroy, 'Making Trade Unionists,' 38-47.

As the *New Dawn* Editor argued, 'One of the most imperative needs for an active democracy is that it be an informed democracy, knowing where it goes and why.'¹⁰⁹ At an even more basic level, the contract reminded members that the specific provisions and protections secured in the contract were not paternalist programmes to be taken for granted, but privileges to be protected and advanced continuously through union activity.¹¹⁰

There were several ways unions conveyed basic contract information to their members. Perhaps most important was the information given potential recruits during organising campaigns in the form of recruitment leaflets or conversations with organisers. RWDSU District 65 went so far as to require in 1959 that all new members attend two union training courses, comparable to the training new employees received from employers.¹¹¹ Another important means for members to receive information was through newsletters published by the national unions and local branches. Local newsletters, such as Macy's *Local 1-S News*, often published the outcomes of contract negotiations in full detail, while summaries of major gains and losses were reported by RCIA locals in the national *Advocate*.¹¹² By 1969, a survey of RCIA Local 1401 in Madison, Wisconsin demonstrated that half of department and variety store members in that union considered their local newsletter and the *Advocate* their main source of information about union activity.¹¹³

The final element of disseminating contractual information and advice were shop stewards, often considered the best conduit between union officials and members, as local unions expanded and as union representation became increasingly professionalised. The steward was responsible for facilitating both upward and downward communication between members and their representatives. The challenge of getting both members and management to follow the contract fell first on his (or less often her) shoulders. The formalisation

¹⁰⁹ 'Education and the Member,' *ND* 4 (24 June 1950), 369. 'Education, Activity, and the A.D.M.,' *ND* 3 (22 Jan. 1949), 33. On the democratic importance of the contract specifically, 'Union Contracts: Democracy in the Work Place,' *RCA* 69 (Dec. 1966), 6; and 'Heart and Soul of the Union,' *RCA* 63 (Oct. 1960), 27.

¹¹⁰ 'The Road Ahead,' *RCA* 65 (April 1962), 6.

¹¹¹ "'65" Classes: New Members Learn About Their Union,' *RWDSU Record* 6 (1 March 1959), 13.

¹¹² For example, 'We Win,' *LI-SN* 4 (1 May 1953). Local news in every issue of the *RCA* was dominated by reports of contract negotiations.

¹¹³ 'Surveys, ca. 1970-1975', M85-312, MAD2M/12/F7, SHSW.

of education by USDAW, the RCIA and the RWDSU over the course of the 1950s and '60s was very much related to the organisers' and shop stewards' need for more specialised training to help them better serve and educate rank-and-file members.¹¹⁴

The second fundamental purpose of union education was to infuse union membership with a sense of history and struggle. The instrumentalist tendency to measure union benefits against dues paid—encouraged in part by shopworkers' unions' recruitment campaigns—was inherently present-focused. The dominance of young workers in the retail labour force, the comparatively short tenure of workers, and the unlikelihood that these workers had ever been union members before all meant that the collective memory of shop working conditions was relatively short-lived. Particularly in a trade with consistently high labour turnover rates, British and American retail unions continually struggled against their members' tendency to miss the forest for the trees, to measure the value of their union solely in terms of short-term contractual gains and losses. The construction and maintenance of *functional loyalties* to union depended on members' willingness to make personal sacrifices of time and service in order to meet long-term goals that they could very possibly not see realised during their own tenure in the union.

In order to help members see the long strides that had been made as a result of collective dedication to union causes, the major shopworkers' unions continually related the history of their respective unions. Again, union publications were an invaluable asset in this educational endeavour. Through the *New Dawn*, USDAW emphasised the gains that had been witnessed in the union since the days of the oppressive living-in system. The union insisted that such gains had been 'Made not given!', even under the purportedly progressive dynamics of Co-operative store employee relations. Similarly, the RCIA and the RWDSU continually reminded members through their publications that dramatic reductions in retail working hours and raises in wages had been contemporaneous with the rapid expansion of unionisation in the retail trades. The lesson in the end

¹¹⁴ On the importance of educating organisers and shop stewards, Kyne, 'Leadership Training,' 8, 30. 'Organize the Unorganized!' *RCA* 51 (Jan. 1948), 15. 'Workers' Education Held Vital To Success of Organized Labor,' *RCA* 49 (Oct. 1946), 28. Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 245-247. For more on the politics of union education for British shop stewards, see McIlroy, 'Making Trade Unionists,' 47-52.

was always the same: that the improved working conditions union members enjoyed were not privileges to be taken for granted, but a 'heritage' gleaned from the sacrifices made by past retail workers. As the Editor of the *Advocate* succinctly put it: 'A union . . . is not a store where one buys better working conditions for the price of a month's dues. A union is an organization where working people pool their loyalty and their counsel. It is in this manner that union gains have been accomplished.'¹¹⁵ The desired end was to convince workers that the improvement of retail working conditions and remuneration in the future depended on their willingness to work collectively and actively toward those ends in the present. (See Figure 5.14.)

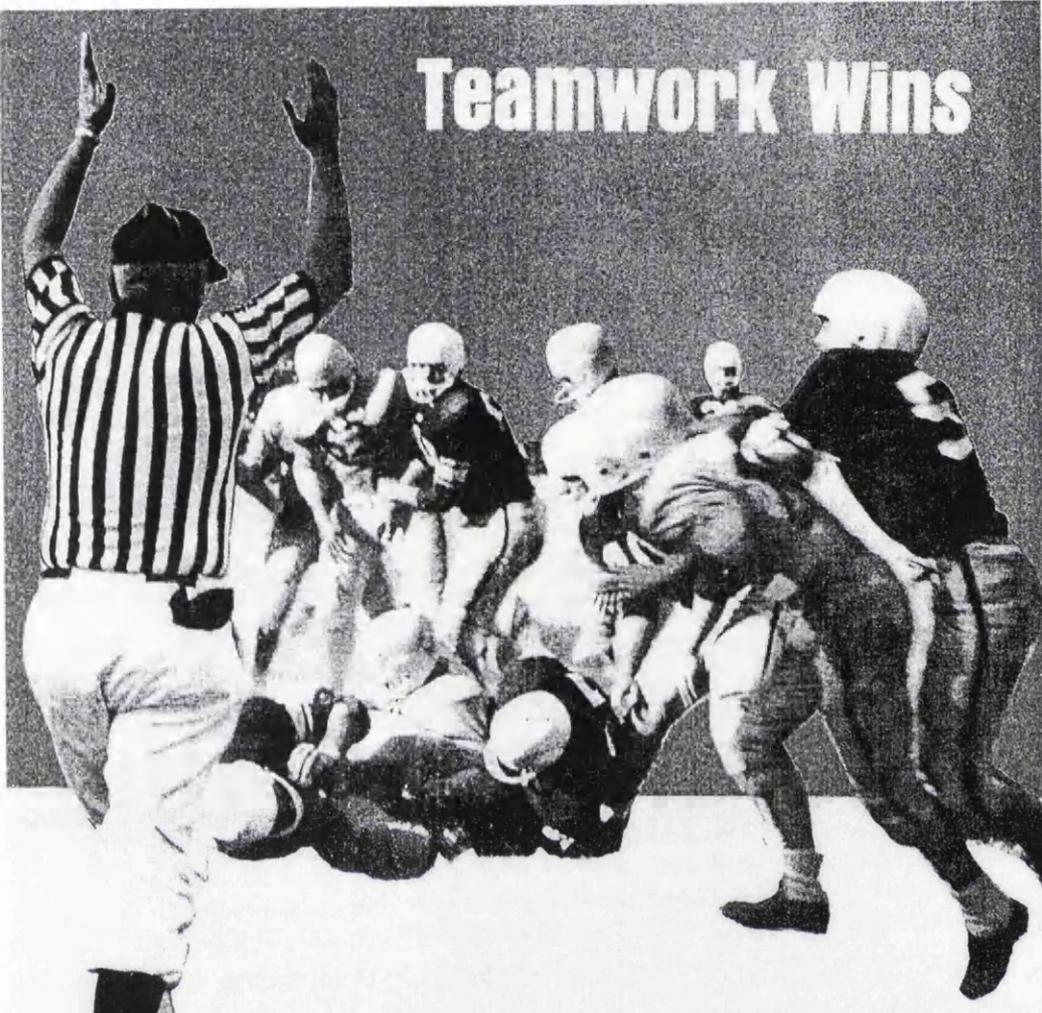
The notion of community and struggle invoked in retail union education campaigns was not only historical. Through the union magazine, the local branch meeting and formal workshops and conferences, trade union leaders in both Britain and America routinely provided information for their members about the working conditions of shopworkers in other branches of their own national union and of retail workers in other countries. Reports of shop working life in many countries, including Austria, Germany, Ghana, and the Soviet Union, were common.¹¹⁶ However, it was the British-American comparison that received the most press in both British and American retail trade union journals.¹¹⁷ By reporting shop working conditions and shop union activities in other countries and

¹¹⁵ Quote from 'Vice Presidents' Comments,' *RCA* 72 (Sept. 1969), 11, (originally from 1965 editorial). On the importance of union history: 'The Indifferent Unionist,' *RCI* 49 (Nov.-Dec. 1945), 10. 'Days of Opportunity,' *ND* 24 (12 Aug. 1944), 257. 'Education for Responsibility,' *ND* 5 (27 Oct. 1951), 673. 'Education for Understanding,' *ND* 2 (7 Feb. 1948), 49. Some examples of history columns are: Jack Griffin, 'About Ourselves,' *ND* 1 (14 June 1947), 218-219. A. W. Burrows, 'Progress Has Been Made,' column each issue, *ND* 23 (28 Aug. 1943) through 23 (4 Dec. 1943). P. C. Hoffman, 'Shop Hours and Closing,' *ND* 1 (13 Dec. 1947), 490-491. 'What's Good About Unions?' *RCA* 65 (Jan. 1962), 6. 'The Lesson of History,' *RCA* 68 (Dec. 1965), 6.

¹¹⁶ 'The Store Employees' Trade Union in the U.S.S.R.,' *ND* 23 (11 Sept. 1943), 294. Olga Rusanova, 'Soviet Distributive Workers,' *ND* 26 (10 Aug. 1946), 296-297. 'New Zealand Shop Workers,' *ND* 1 (26 July 1947), 286. S. R. Watts, 'Shopworkers' Problems are International,' *ND* 6 (2 Aug. 1952), 507. 'Visit to Ghana,' *ND* 11 (29 June 1957), 391-392. 'America Rediscovered!' *RCA* 55 (May 1952), 2-4. 'Japanese Delegation to Be Guests of I-S,' *LI-SN* 3 (15 Nov. 1951), 2. 'Retail and Wholesale Workers Abroad,' *Retail Employee* 1 (5 Nov. 1938), 12. 'German Retail Workers Keep up Fight Despite Heavy Odds,' *Retail Employee* 1 (12 Dec. 1938), 10.

¹¹⁷ T. W. Cynog-Jones, 'American Journey,' *ND*, every issue from 6 (11 Oct. 1952) to 7 (17 Jan. 1953), 37-38. P. C. Hoffman, 'Stores in the States: The Struggle for Organisation,' *ND* 6 (29 March 1952), 200-202 and 6 (12 April 1952), 243-244. 'Wilkinson's Address,' *RWDSE* 5 (22 June 1942), 12. 'Britain's Retail Workers Prepare for Postwar Era,' *RWDSE* 7 (1 April 1944), 10. 'How Trade Unionism Works for British Retail Clerks,' *LI-SN* 10 (1 Dec. 1959), 3. 'Workers' Window on America' series, *ND* 19 (1965).

Figure 5.14. One for all



Teamwork Wins

A good local union is like a winning football team. Everyone is in there doing his part to the best of his ability. In union affairs, as in all team efforts, everyone loses when anyone carries less than his share of the load.

Resolve in 1969 not to be a drag on your fellow RCIA members. Take a more active role in the affairs of your local union. Attend its meetings regularly; serve on committees. Help in any way you can to the extent of your time and ability.

The fine tradition of collective action has brought the RCIA to its present size and influence. Play your part in increasing its strength and effectiveness.



Like retail businesses, the shopworkers' unions used the rhetoric of teamwork to invoke a sense of mutual dependence and responsibility. In the unions, the team was not just one of the present, but one incorporating members of the past and future.

Retail Clerks Advocate 72 (Jan. 1969), 34.

emphasising the shared struggle to elevate the condition of shopworkers across the globe, the editors of the retail trade union journals encouraged members to feel a sense of international solidarity through their trade union membership.

Through educational materials and activities, the shopworkers' unions encouraged inter-union and international solidarity across trade as well. The retail union journals reported frequently on conferences and other union activities within the AFL and CIO in America and the TUC in Britain.¹¹⁸ At the individual level, articles about long, drawn-out strikes in other industries often included information about how the retail union member could contribute time, food, clothes or money to help support fellow trade unionists in the midst of industrial dispute. Such was the case when Macy's Local 1-S in New York sent food and clothes to miners on strike in Pennsylvania in 1950.¹¹⁹ At the local level, leaders of national labour organisations and of the national retail unions continually reminded local branches that they could help advance the cause of British or American workers at home by affiliating with other local trade unions at the city and regional levels to facilitate co-ordinated economic and political action.¹²⁰

Similar stories about trade unionists suffering in poorer countries around the world made the collective workers' struggle an international one. At the most personal level, retail unionists could give money through their local union to go directly to trade unions in developing nations.¹²¹ At the institutional level, union magazines frequently reported the activities of international labour organisations such as the ILO and ICFTU. These organisations campaigned for minimum labour standards across the non-Communist world, but also contributed to the ideological battles of the Cold War by protesting against abuse of labour under Communist regimes and by highlighting the impediments to freedom of organisation in Communist countries.¹²² Trade union articles on international

¹¹⁸ See 'Labor News' column, *RCA*, for example, 40 (July-Aug. 1937), 10-11. 'Congress of Responsibility,' *ND* 25 (6 Oct. 1945), 307-308, 319.

¹¹⁹ 'Aid to Miners Delivered,' *LI-SN* 1 (April 1950), 1.

¹²⁰ 'Meet Your Fellow Worker,' *ND* 2 (15 May 1948), 217. 'Pres. William Green Urges All AFL Local Unions to Affiliate With State, City Groups,' *RCA* 52 (March 1949), 30. 'Labor Unity,' *RWDSE* 13 (May 1950), 2.

¹²¹ 'Strikers in Philippines Send Rice S. O. S. to I-S,' *LI-SN* 5 (1 Oct. 1953), 1. Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 249, 297.

¹²² 'Strengthening the Bonds of International Solidarity,' *ND* 11 (4 May 1957), 268. For more on the TUC and AFL-CIO's international activities through the ICFTU, see Anthony Carew, 'The Trades Union Congress in the International Labour Movement,' in Campbell, Fishman, McIlroy (Eds.), *British Trade Unions*, 145-167.

labour organisations often highlighted the roles played by the executives of the national retail unions, such as Martin Kyne, RWDSU Executive Secretary, who also served on the CIO's International Affairs Committee and as a delegate at the founding conference of the ICFTU, and RCIA President James Suffridge, who also served in the late 1960s as President of the International Federation of Commercial, Clerical and Technical Employees, which had members in Europe, Asia, and the Americas.¹²³ Reports of these and other union executives' activities in the international labour movement encouraged the retail unionist to believe that through affiliation with a strong national union and support of the national unions' executives, he or she was participating in the fight against Communism and aiding the cause of economic democracy for workers throughout the world. In sum, trade union education was a means for the national unions to nurture international loyalties among union members, and also a means for mobilising those loyalties in support of the British and American trade unions' political and ideological campaigns abroad.

The third, and best established, purpose of union education was to encourage members to engage strategically in the local and national political arena on behalf of the labour movement and 'workers' interests'. John McIlroy has argued that general trade union education in Britain became decreasingly ideological in the post-war years.¹²⁴ However, education provided at the local union level in both America and Britain remained intensely political and ideological. The leaders of shopworkers' unions in both the US and UK considered political education and activism a natural extension of union activity. After all, as RWDSU Executive Secretary Martin Kyne argued in 1949, 'unless we are aware of what is going on, the gains we make on the picket line will be defaulted by losses on the ballot line'.¹²⁵ There could have been no better spur to action for American unions in that sense than the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, the

¹²³ There were many articles to this effect, of which the following are a sample: 'World T.U.C. Calls to All Peoples,' *ND* 25 (21 April 1945), 120-121, 128. Sir Vincent Tewson, 'British Unions in the Defence of Democracy,' *ND* 5 (23 June 1951), 387-388. 'The International Labour Organisation,' *ND* 25 (28 July 1945), 232-235. 'The RCIA and the International Labor Movement,' *RCA* 65 (March 1962), 6. 'Kyne to Attend ICFTU Convention,' *RWDSE* 15 (June 1951), 1, 10. 'World White Collar Unionists Meet in Washington,' *RCA* 70 (Dec. 1967), 14-17. On the internationalism and history of the IFC-CTE, also known as FIET, see 'RCIA Delegates Attend World Congress of White Collar Workers,' *RCA* 61 (Oct. 1958), 6-7.

¹²⁴ McIlroy, 'Making Trade Unionists,' 37-65.

¹²⁵ Martin C. Kyne, 'Once More on Political Action,' *RWDSE* 12 (Oct. 1949), 8.

setbacks it posed to hard-won union gains, and the powerful reinvigoration of post-war business activism that it symbolised.

A major purpose of political education in the American unions was to counter the negative image of unions, constructed chiefly by business activists, in order to advance the issue-specific agendas of the unions and of the American labour movement broadly speaking. Consequently, the audience for the RCIA and RWDSU political education campaigns was not only their hard-won yet volatile membership base, but the friends, family members, neighbours, and even customers of members. This was best evidenced during Congressional and Parliamentary elections, when the unions encouraged their members to 'ring doorbells' and remind family, friends and neighbours of all that could be lost by not voting.¹²⁶

In Britain, USDAW education programmes had long focused primarily on political activism. However, the coming of the Labour Party to power in 1945 brought a new sense of urgency to the political agenda; shopworkers were finally close to securing the regulatory legislation they had long bargained for. But the Labour Party meant more to USDAW than the advancement of specific union-centred political goals. The Party's new power in the post-war years represented the potential development of the socialist Britain USDAW leaders had long envisioned. In effect, the political education of USDAW members was not simply about securing issue-centred legislation, but about proving grassroots support for an idealistic political vision.¹²⁷ Furthermore, in both Britain and America union leaders depended on member activity in political affairs to support their claims to represent members when they testified and lobbied in Parliament and Congress, just as unions depended on participation of an educated member base in local branch affairs to substantiate their claims to democratic representation at the bargaining table.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ On the direct connection between business activism and education plans, 'Chaney Stresses Importance of Union's Educational Plan,' *RWDSE* 10 (Jan. 1947), 3. On conveying the message to others, Kyne, 'Once More,' 8. 'Your Right,' *RCA* 55 (Sept. 1952), 3. 'Vote Your Convictions—But VOTE!' *RCA* 65 (Nov. 1962), 6. 'The 65c Minimum Is In Danger,' *RWDSE* 9 (April 1946), 4.

¹²⁷ USDAW's commitment to socialism was regularly expressed in front-page editorials in the early post-war years, for example: 'Organise and Educate,' *ND* 1 (4 Oct. 1947), 373; 'The Road From Southport,' *ND* 1 (20 Sept. 1947), 353.

¹²⁸ 'Labor Day—1949,' *RCA* 52 (Sept. 1949), 15. See also last section, Chapter Four.

Political education in the shopworkers' unions followed on easily from other union activities, using much the same media as recruitment or bargaining campaigns. As the Editor of the *Retail, Wholesale, Department Store Employee* argued in 1943, 'Labour must organize on the political front as it would organize for a plant election.' He recommended that 'mass meetings, radio programs, leaflets, posters, house-to-house canvass' and other organising mechanisms be used to educate members and the public about labour's political battles in Washington.¹²⁹ Branch meetings and International Annual Delegate Meetings also provided a forum for political discussion, and hardly a year passed in any of the major unions without multiple resolutions on key political issues. Such debates included discussion of nuclear weapons, war and peace, labour rights, Communism, economic policy, housing, urban planning, and civil rights. These discussions were consequently reported in union magazines, one of the main media for political education for all the shopworkers' unions.¹³⁰

The magazines also reported the activities of union representatives in Parliament and Congress, documenting the respective union's power in national politics.¹³¹ But, as the editors of the retail union magazines continually argued, union members were also expected to lobby on their own behalf by writing to their Congressional or Parliamentary representatives or to local newspapers. Through union journal editorials and regular columns, the presidents, general secretaries, vice presidents and other major officials of the RCIA, RWDSU, USDAW and local branches offered members talking points on current legislation and other social and economic themes in local and national politics.¹³² At an even

¹²⁹ 'Turn the Heat On!' *RWDSE* 6 (1 Aug. 1943), 4.

¹³⁰ See ADM reports from USDAW published annually in the *New Dawn*. For example, 'Highlights of the A.D.M.,' *ND* 6 (26 April 1952), 259-261. See also RCIA reports, such as 'Democracy in Action: The RCIA's 24th International Convention,' *RCA* 66 (July 1963), several articles.

¹³¹ 'International Makes Protest Against Patman Bill,' *RCA* 43 (May-June 1940), 20-22. 'Senator Rallies Liberals to Fight For Retention of Retail Coverage,' *RWDSE* 9 (April 1946), 3, 18, 19; 'Taft-Hartley Act and How it Affects the RCIA,' *RCA* 56 (June 1953), 3-4. Alfred Robens, MP, 'Shops—More or Less,' *ND* 25 (8 Sept. 1945), 276-277, 288. Harold Boardman, 'Parliamentary Scene' column, *ND*, regularly from 1 (1 Nov. 1947), 414.

¹³² Regular politics as news: 'Westminster Chimes', 'Parliamentary Scene' columns in the *ND*. Samples of columns with talking points on political issues: 'A Message from Pres. Samuel Wolchok,' *RWDSE* 6 (1 Aug. 1943), 5; Martin C. Kyne, 'The Business Cycle and Organizational Drives,' *RWDSE* 12 (March 1949), 8; 'The RCIA Needs Your Help to Pass New Minimum Wage Law,' *RCA* 58 (April 1955), 3; 'Suffridge Testifies for Wage Extension,' *RCA* 60 (April 1957), 4-6; 'What is Labor's Most Important Problem?' *RCA* 61 (June 1958), 12 (on 'right to work' laws); 'The RCIA and the Future of Our Cities,' *RCA* 72 (July 1969), 6. 'Shadow Over the Sun,' *ND* 5

more basic level, the *New Dawn* offered specific advice on how to structure a well-argued letter, suggesting that members choose an interesting subject, and keep their sentences and paragraphs short and simple.¹³³ Education was not, therefore, an end in itself, but a means to creating and mobilising *functional* and *ideological loyalties* among union members.

Beyond issue-specific politics, the union magazine was also part of the party-political machine, explicitly so in Britain and more subtly in America. Through the *New Dawn*, USDAW openly and consistently supported the Labour Party and its platform in all national and local elections, encouraging members to 'Work and vote for Labour'. The union supported candidates for Parliamentary elections, including USDAW members and officials seeking election as Labour or Labour/Co-operative Party candidates. Furthermore, the Editor offered the Labour Party space in the *New Dawn* to solicit contributions from local branches and members.¹³⁴ (See Figure 5.15.)

Although the RWDSU claimed a more cautiously non-partisan political agenda, it also used the *Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Employee* to build support for individual candidates running on pro-labour agendas. In the late 1930s, RWDSU President Samuel Wolchok openly campaigned for the nascent American Labor Party. However, he and the union firmly rescinded their support for third parties by the time of Henry Wallace's 1948 campaign for the Presidency.¹³⁵ In contrast, the RCIA remained firmly non-partisan and refused, at least at the national level, to support individual candidates for office until 1964. This policy resulted in part from the union's craft union heritage, in part from the

(26 May 1951), 321 (on cost of living), 'What We Must Do To Keep Britain Going: The Cripps Plan Analysed,' *ND* 1 (18 Oct. 1947), 21.

¹³³ Frank Allaun, 'How to Write to the Press,' *ND* 6 (10 May 1952), 363-364. 'Dear Editor,' *ND* 7 (15 Aug. 1953), 521-522. Similar articles appeared in American union magazines as well, 'How to Write to Congressmen,' *1428 Message* 8 (April 1963), 2. 'A Letter for Democracy,' *LI-SN* 11 (15 Feb. 1960), 1.

¹³⁴ There were multitudes of editorials, advertisements and articles supporting the Labour Party in the *New Dawn*, particularly around elections, of which these are typical samples: 'The Union's Parliamentary Panel,' *ND* 25 (30 June 1945), 198. 'Make the Town Halls Labour!' *ND* 25 (20 Oct. 1945), 321. 'Labour For the Councils,' *ND* 26 (19 Oct. 1946), 390. 'Let Us Win Through Together,' *ND* 4 (18 Feb. 1950), 112-113. 'Labour at Scarborough,' *ND* 8 (9 Oct. 1954), 644-647, 669. Soliciting donations: 'It Will Be Your Fight: Pile up the Ammunition!' *ND* 25 (5 May 1945), 130. 'Labour's Call to U.S.D.A.W.,' *ND* 3 (24 Dec. 1949), 809-810.

¹³⁵ An example of the RWDSU's support for individual candidates from the very first issue of its magazine: 'Why the American Labor Party Supports LaGuardia,' *RWDSE* 1 (Oct. 1937), 8. On the union and third parties: 'The Third Party,' *RWDSE* 6 (1 April 1943), 17, 23, 27; 'For an Independent Labor Party,' *Midwest Labor World* 1 (14 July 1943), 1, 3; and 'Wallace and the Third Party,' *RWDSE* 11 (April 1948), 4.

Figure 5.15. USDAW's partisanship



WORK
and
VOTE
for
LABOUR

Create a new social order in which economic and social security, democratic freedom, and human fellowship and dignity are combined.

ERE

USDAW commonly used the *New Dawn* to educate members in the Labour Party's agenda and to help foster *ideological loyalties* to that agenda.

The New Dawn 5 (13 Oct. 1951), 665.

upheaval in party politics caused by the New Deal, and in part from the fact that James Suffridge, who served as the RCIA's leader from 1944 through 1967, was a registered Republican. Nevertheless, even the RCIA abandoned its non-partisan policy when Suffridge met with President Lyndon Johnson at the White House to announce his support for the President's re-election campaign in 1964.¹³⁶

Shopworkers' unions also used the political action club or conference to convey their political goals to members and facilitate member participation in the political arena. From the mid-1940s, the RWDSU supported the growth of CIO Political Action Committees (PACs) and encouraged members to contribute time and money to their local PAC, furthering solidarity with unionised workers outside the retail trade.¹³⁷ Macy's Local 1-S was operating its own PAC at least by 1954, when it worked with other CIO PACs to unseat an anti-labour New York Congressman, elect a pro-labour representative, fight for rent control and call for the repeal of anti-labour legislation.¹³⁸

Like the RWDSU, the RCIA at first supported an inter-union education programme, encouraging members to support the non-partisan Labor's League for Political Education from 1947 with both votes and dollars. However, as the anti-union, 'right to work' pressures of business activism mounted and the permanence of the Taft-Hartley Act seemed more certain than ever, the RCIA formed its own 'Active Ballot Clubs' (ABCs) in local branches from 1957. Membership in the ABCs was voluntary for members, their family and friends, and donations were encouraged. The ballot clubs ran voter registration campaigns among members and in their communities, offered information on legislative issues 'so that voting can be done intelligently', formed special committees to research local political issues, and represented members' interests in Congress and state legislatures. At the International level, the ABC was inseparable from the union: the International

¹³⁶ These articles encouraging members to vote their conscience demonstrate the union's earlier non-partisan policy: 'Your Right,' 3. 'Vote Your Convictions,' 6. From the moment of transition to open candidate support: 'RCIA President Announces Support of President Johnson,' *RCA* 67 (Sept. 1964), 6. On Suffridge's Republican membership, 'Retail Clerks—Bio Summaries,' RCIA collection accession folder, SWHS. For a good overview of non-partisanship, third parties, and the instrumental rather than ideological nature of post-war American labour politics, see David Brody, *Workers in Industrial America: Essays on the 20th Century Struggle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 199-241.

¹³⁷ 'A Fledgling with a Great Future,' *RWDSE* 7 (1 Aug. 1944), 4. Martin C. Kyne, 'Think it Over,' *RWDSE* 17 (March 1954), 4. Samuel Wolchok, 'An Editorial—On PAC,' *RWDSE* 11 (May 1948), 1.

¹³⁸ 'The State of the Union,' *L1-SN* 6 (15 Feb. 1955), 2.

president served as the ABC president, the RCIA vice presidents served as ABC vice presidents, and so on. Consequently, the formation of the ABCs changed little in the political functioning at the top. The main significance of the ballot clubs was to build political interest among members from the grassroots, and to make political activity a fundamental function of local branches in their communities. Furthermore, as the 'C' in ABC suggested, one of the main incentives of the clubs was to reinforce and direct the bonds of social solidarity among members in service to the union's social, economic and political goals.¹³⁹ (See Figure 5.16.)

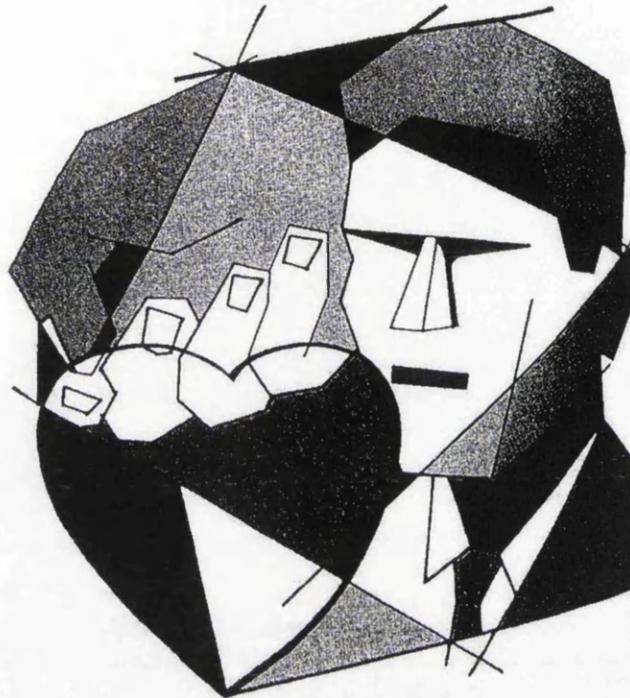
The political conference was USDAW's version of the ABC. USDAW, and NUDAW before it, had never been shy of political partisanship, as demonstrated by the deep solidarity with the Labour Party expressed in the *New Dawn*. The union's Divisional Political Conferences, which began during World War II, were also deeply allied with Labour Party politics. The conferences, held annually in each of USDAW's divisions, offered members of all local branches in the region the opportunity to meet with and address local Labour MPs. Organisers intended these conferences to convince members that 'if industrial activity in his trade union is one hand of the worker, then political activity is his other hand.' So, it followed, 'an industrially active worker whose working-class political outlook is one of indifference is fighting for the future with one hand tied behind his back.'¹⁴⁰ The political conferences encouraged USDAW members to work with 'both hands' by temporarily circumventing the expanding union, TUC and Labour Party bureaucracies in order to open up direct communications between individual members and those directly responsible for political change in Parliament. However, the fact that the conferences were organised by the union and attended by other union members reinforced the underlying premise: that for the rest of the year, the union was the venue through which political information could be gleaned and political action could be organised.

¹³⁹ 'Labor's League for Political Education,' *RCA* 53 (July 1950), 16-17. 'Active Ballot Club Sponsored by RCIA to Promote Constructive Legislation,' *RCA* 60 (July 1957), 8-9. 'Work for a Better Nation Through the Active Ballot Club,' *RCA* 70 (March 1967), 9. News of the ABCs were reported regularly in the 'ABC News' column, *RCA*.

¹⁴⁰ 'Use Both Hands,' *ND* 24 (15 Jan. 1944), 17. News from each political conference was reported in the *New Dawn*, for example, 'Politics and the Distributive Worker: Scottish Conference,' *ND* 24 (12 Feb. 1944), 53, 'The Trade Unionist and the Ballot Box,' *ND* 7 (5 Dec. 1953), 771-772.

Figure 5.16. The member is the union

**YOU ARE THE
HEART,
HEAD AND
HANDS
OF YOUR
UNION**



You can be a working force to make your union a better organization, even if your time is limited.

Volunteering for election day work in connection with your Active Ballot Club will take only a few hours a year. Education and Legislative Committee posts are open to those who can play larger roles.

And the opportunities for participation continue. For those who wish to become even more active, there are grievance and negotiating committee jobs. And, finally, for the few who can assume leadership responsibilities, there are positions as elected officers and members of the Executive Board.

Reap the rewards of service to your union. Take these opportunities to enlarge your outlook and your sphere of influence. It will be an interesting and enriching experience.

Political work through the ABC was an integral part of RCIA local union activity.
Retail Clerks Advocate 63 (Feb. 1960), inside cover.

For both the British and American shopworkers' unions, grassroots informal education programmes and organised institutional education programmes served three main functions. First, such programmes conveyed information from the unions to members, including the unions' economic, social and political goals relevant to the workplace and to broader ideological programmes. This sharing of information underpinned the unions' claims to represent an informed membership democratically. Secondly, education programmes helped to further the solidarity and loyalty built up through social activities by expanding the union community along historical and international dimensions. This was crucial for helping members understand the contribution they were making to the overall advancement of the labour cause. Finally, the information and goals presented to members through union education programmes provided them with the tools necessary to help further their unions' functional goals, both in the workplace and in the political arena. In turn, political activities and clubs organised by the unions provided a venue for soliciting and directing member activity.

Conclusion

Overall, the various social activities, national campaigns and education programmes that formed an important part of retail union life in both Britain and America at mid-century aimed to reduce member apathy toward collective bargaining and politics and revitalise union democracy. The overarching goal was to foster *functional loyalties* to the union that would spur members on to promote unionism among their friends and colleagues, to be more productive employees, to participate in union meetings, and to become more politically active on behalf of union goals. Instrumentalism and idealism were not necessarily at odds in these endeavours, but were instead mutually definitive components of the shopworkers' unions' efforts to secure their members' loyalties.

In their attempts to solicit *functional loyalties* from members, USDAW, the RCIA, the RWDSU and independent unions conscientiously and necessarily focused on issues that directly intersected with their members' instrumentalist interests. Even union politics were to a large extent instrumentalist. For example, in 1944, Sir Walter Citrine, General Secretary of the TUC, used the pages of the *New Dawn* to invite British trade unionists to be more active in politics with the admonition 'Politics can mean a decent job, a good home, a good standard of life

and a fair chance for your child. You can't afford to be out of politics!¹⁴¹ Furthermore, shopworkers' unions' organisers and representatives knew that nothing would get members to union meetings, on the picket lines, or in the polling booths quite like a tangible threat to wages. Hence the continual coverage given the Fair Labor Standards Act in RCIA and RWDSU magazines, the cost of living and Co-operative wage settlements in the *New Dawn*, and wage negotiating battles in *Local I-S News*.

Appeals to shopworkers to organise their unorganised colleagues were instrumentalist as well. A typical RCIA organising campaign reminded members of the importance of organising their colleagues with the warning that 'Their plight affects you. Until they are organized, your security and progress are in jeopardy.' It continued, 'Your hard-won collective bargaining freedom and attendant economic benefits can only be preserved and advanced by helping the unorganized in your community to organize.'¹⁴² For USDAW, the call for active member participation in recruitment and maintenance of membership drives was similarly instrumentalist. (See Figure 5.17.) Even in the call to action on behalf of the greater good of the union then, the appeal was often an individualist, instrumentalist one.

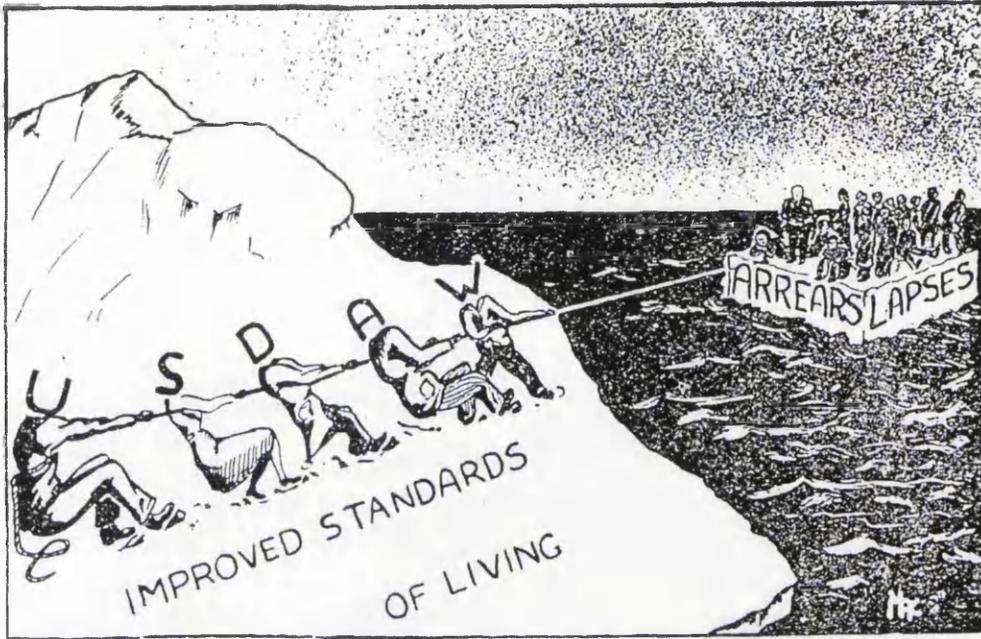
Even so, in the 'white collar' shopworkers' unions, the invocation to action was not purely utilitarian, but was often in fact relentlessly utopian. For USDAW in particular, the final goal was not just better contracts or wage and hour legislation, but the realisation of a socialist society where all could share equally the benefits of national prosperity, and where individuals would make personal sacrifices for the greater good. USDAW's leisure, education and political programmes were all constructed in ways that suited this broader ideological agenda. Through the long post-war period, USDAW remained unequivocally devoted to the Labour Party's 'socialist' vision.

Although the politics of the RCIA and RWDSU were less explicitly partisan, those unions also envisaged an ideal world where trade union members would collectively labour for a better, more just society. As an RCIA editorial optimistically claimed, 'workers' education aims to make the worker a good trade

¹⁴¹ Sir Walter Citrine, 'Politics Can Affect Your Pay Packet,' *ND* 24 (23 Sept. 1944), 307.

¹⁴² 'Help Organize the Unorganized,' *RCIA* 60 (March 1957), 6. 'The New Trend,' 13-14.

Figure 5.17. Instrumentalist incentive for maintenance of membership



Which side are **you** on ?

USDAW leaders continually reminded members that their benefits depended on the state of the union as a whole, and that failure to do their part detracted from the good of all.

The New Dawn 2 (11 Dec. 1948), 621.

unionist, a good American, and a good world citizen.¹⁴³ The community service activities of local American shopworkers' unions offer further evidence of unions' attempts to ensure more just, more economically secure, and more aesthetically pleasing communities for all. Indeed, shopworkers' unions, like their 'blue collar' counterparts, continued to campaign actively for local- and national-level advances that would benefit all workers and trade unionists equally. If anything, as the RCIA and the RWDSU grew in power, they became more deeply involved with broader liberal economic and social agendas, including civil rights and urban renewal, as evidenced by the RCIA's establishment of an Urban Affairs Department in 1969 and the RWDSU's strong showing at Civil Rights marches in Washington.¹⁴⁴ For all three of the major British and American shopworkers' unions then, politics, ideology and a utopian sense of collectivism were major driving forces behind unions' efforts to recruit *functional loyalties* from members.

Instrumentalism and ideology, or individualism and collectivism, were complementary phenomena in the British and American shopworkers' unions. The general assertion made by the unions to members and potential members in the post-war years was that individual security could best be provided through collective effort in all union activities. Consequently, instrumentalism was not necessarily a negative force undermining *ideological loyalties* to socialism in Britain or to economic democracy in America. Rather, instrumentalist appeals to individual self-interest were necessary for the unions to build up the *fundamental loyalties* from new members that would help sustain and expand union membership. In turn, adequately fulfilled instrumentalist *fundamental loyalties* provided the basis on which *functional* and in turn *ideological loyalties* to the unions' social, economic, cultural and political campaigns could be cultivated. The question that arises then, is not whether British and American trade unions could have progressed further toward a socialist ideal in the post-war period if they had not succumbed to the instrumentalism of wage, hour, and fringe benefits bargaining; rather, could the trade unions have progressed as far as they did, in

¹⁴³ 'Workers' Education Held Vital,' 28.

¹⁴⁴ 'The RCIA and the Future of Our Cities,' *RCA* 72 (July 1969), 6. 'Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom Marks New High in Fight for Equal Rights,' *LI-SN* 8 (1 June 1957), 3.

terms of membership, political power, and legal protection if they had not directly addressed workers' instrumentalist demands?¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Patrick Renshaw has argued no, Renshaw, *American Labor*, esp. 189-191.

Chapter Six

Explaining Successes and Failures in the Construction of Retail Union Loyalties

The previous two chapters have analysed the importance of member loyalty for the day-to-day functioning and ideological objectives of the British and American shopworkers' unions, and the ways the unions went about recruiting member loyalties. The question that remains then, is to what extent were the shopworkers' unions successful in their efforts? To what degree were members' *fundamental* and *functional loyalties* forthcoming? What factors explain the unions' successes and failures with regard to recruiting and maintaining member loyalty?

Labour historians have commonly attributed the difficulty of post-war service sector unionisation in Britain and America to the predominance of women, part-time employees, and workers with 'white collar' mentalities in the service trades.¹ All of these were indeed complicating factors for the British and American shopworkers' unions and will be considered in turn. However, these factors do not provide sufficient explanation in themselves. Successes and failures in soliciting and maintaining *fundamental union loyalties* among retail workers can be more readily explained by analysis of factors unique to the retail labour market. In contrast, the difficulties of maintaining *functional* and *ideological loyalties* among retail union members are best explained with regard to factors common to the British and American labour movements on the whole in the post-war years. On the one hand, the unions claimed to offer a vibrant democratic alternative to the lack of economic democracy provided by unrestrained capitalism as discussed in Chapter Four. These claims were undermined, however, by union leaders' efforts to concentrate member power in stronger national unions. This concentration of power allowed the unions more influence in national politics, but simultaneously undermined the potential of local union democracy.

¹ Chris Wrigley, *British Trade Unions Since 1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Chris Wrigley, 'Trade Unions, the Government and the Economy,' in Terry Gourvish and Alan O'Day (Eds.), *Britain Since 1945* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 59-87. Michael Goldfield, *The Decline of Organized Labor in the United States* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987).

Measuring Union Loyalty

Despite the overarching similarities in shopworkers' unions' techniques for soliciting and maintaining members' loyalties, the major unions met with quite different degrees of success. Two basic indices for measuring the unions' successes with regard to *fundamental loyalties* are total union membership and union density. The advantage of such measures is that they offer strictly comparable statistics on which to base this comparative analysis. However, the provision must constantly be made that loyalty should be measured through reference to its behavioural manifestations. This is even more the case for *functional loyalties* which, because of their complexity, will be analysed with regard to specific groups of workers or specific union activities.

Starting with *fundamental loyalties*, the RCIA was by far the most successful over the long term, increasing its membership from 18,000 in 1937 to over 700,000 in the late 1970s. Between 1933 and 1968, the RCIA consistently reported membership growth at ten times the rate of the AFL, and later the AFL-CIO.² The RWDSU also met with enormous success in terms of total membership in its first decade of organising, but then spent the 1950s and '60s recovering from the fallout caused by the anti-Communism that nearly destroyed the union in 1948. In contrast, USDAW membership stagnated following the amalgamation of NUDAW and NAUSA&C in 1947. USDAW experienced less than two per cent total net growth in membership between 1947 and 1965, even as employment in the retail trades was expanding. (See Table 6.1.)

Total membership is an important indicator of loyalty to the unions because it was in part the 'strength in numbers' that determined each union's power vis-à-vis its parent organisation or favoured political party. By the end of the 1960s the RCIA was the sixth largest union in the AFL-CIO. The growing strength of the union in the post-war years was reflected in President James Suffridge's election to the AFL-CIO Executive Council in 1957, and—despite his registration with the Republican Party—his closeness to Democratic Presidents

² This dramatic comparative growth was in large part a factor of the extremely low rates of organisation in the American retail trades before the mid-1930s. Marten S. Estey, 'Patterns of Union Membership in the Retail Trades,' *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 8 (July 1955), 560. Marten Estey, 'The Retail Clerks,' in Albert A. Blum et al (Eds.), *White Collar Workers* (New York: Random House, 1971), 46-82, pp. 53-54.

Table 6.1. Total Membership in the Major British and American Retail Unions, 1928-1978

<u>Year</u>	<u>RCIA</u>	<u>RWDSU</u>	<u>USDAW</u>
1928	—	—	104,129*
1935	—	—	144,675*
1937	18,000	40,000	171,789*
1939	65,300	75,000	193,906*
1940	73,700	80,000	223,487*
1941	85,400	—	—
1944	100,000	120,000	—
1945	—	—	266,467*
1946	119,600	—	—
1947	163,700	—	343,137**
1948	185,400	145,000	341,666
1949	202,500	52,000	340,303
1950	—	—	342,789
1951	—	—	347,737
1952	—	—	345,990
1953	—	—	339,044
1954	246,500	—	343,835
1955	—	—	346,135
1956	—	—	348,855
1957	—	—	352,333
1958	—	—	353,131
1959	—	—	351,465
1960	342,000	143,300	355,271
1961	—	—	351,371
1962	—	—	356,038
1963	—	—	354,701
1964	428,000	167,000	—
1965	—	—	349,230
1966	—	—	336,289
1967	~500,000	—	—
1977	~700,000	—	441,539
1978	—	—	462,178

*NUDAW membership

**Year of amalgamation between NUDAW and NAUSA&C, which had approximately 106,000 members (Richardson, *Union of Many Trades*, 171).

Sources: Baker & France, *Personnel Administration and Labor Relations in Department Stores*, 104. Richardson, *Union of Many Trades*, 89, 146, 202, 252, 321. Ronald D. Michman, 'A Survey of Unionization Trends in Department Stores,' *JR* 43 (Spring 1967), 23. 'Report of the Organizing Committee,' *RCA* 70 (Sept. 1967), 26. 'International Officers Report Union Growth and Strength,' *RCA* 80 (Aug.-Sept. 1977), 3. 'Annual Delegate Meeting, 1967,' *ND* 21 (May 1967), 129. Francis P. G. Dugdale, *Just Rewards and Fair Competition: Wages Councils in Retailing* (MSc Dissertation, University of Manchester, 1990), 80. Marten S. Estey, 'Patterns of Union Membership in the Retail Trades,' *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 8 (July 1955), 557-565.

John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson in the 1960s.³ (See Figure 6.1) In 1961, Vice President Johnson invited Suffridge to join him in touring six Asian countries considered real or potential battlegrounds in the Cold War.⁴ USDAW was similarly influential in Britain. In 1945 NUDAW was the seventh largest union in the TUC, and USDAW became fifth largest after the 1947 amalgamation.⁵ In part due to USDAW's sustained—even if not expanding—membership, its activists were influential in the TUC and Labour Party. When the Party took office in 1945, NUDAW's first woman organiser, long-time labour activist and Member of Parliament, Ellen Wilkinson, was appointed Minister for Education. When the Labour Party returned to power in 1964, Prime Minister Harold Wilson appointed Walter Padley, then President of USDAW since 1948, as Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.⁶ The important place of the shopworkers' unions and their leaders in British and American politics and labour federations was a reflection in part of their comparative numerical strength in membership.

Absolute numbers are one indication of union strength. More apposite, in terms of bargaining power, is density—the proportion of workers who are unionised in a given trade. To establish density in retailing, however, is prohibitively complex, given the statistical data available. The RCIA was the only shopworkers' union with exclusively retail membership; the RWDSU, USDAW, and other unions with retail membership—such as the TGWU and the Teamsters—had jurisdiction over a wide range of workers including wholesale, warehouse, transport, textile and other employees. For example, only about 80,000 of the RWDSU's total 150,000 membership in 1954 were employed in retail stores.⁷ In effect, the retail membership of each union catering to some

³ 'RCIA's 79th Year One of Best Ever,' *RCA* 70 (March 1967), 2. 'President Suffridge Elected to AFL-CIO Executive Council,' *RCA* 60 (March 1957), 2-3.

⁴ 'Asia's Labor Movement and the Battle for a Free World,' *RCA* 64 (July 1961), 16-20. See also 'Suffridge Attends Inauguration of South Vietnam President,' *RCA* 70 (Dec. 1967), 2.

⁵ Alan Campbell, Nina Fishman and John McIlroy, 'The Post-War Compromise: Mapping Industrial Politics, 1945-64,' Alan Campbell, Nina Fishman, John McIlroy (Eds), *British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics: The Post-War Compromise, 1945-64* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 104.

⁶ Sir William Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades: The History of USDAW* (Manchester: USDAW, 1978), 164-165, 242.

⁷ Estey, 'Patterns of Union Membership,' 560. Raulston G. Zundel, 'Conflict and Co-operation Among Retail Unions,' *Journal of Business* 27 (Oct. 1954), 301-311. USDAW retail membership statistics are only available for 1977 to 2000. In this period the per cent of members who were retail workers increased from 59 to 68 per cent. 'USDAW Membership Figures,' 1977-2000, provided by USDAW Research Department.

Figure 6.1. Exercising political influence



Massachusetts Senator, John F. Kennedy (left), and RCIA President, James Suffridge developed a long-standing relationship before Kennedy's election to President in 1960. Both fought a long-term battle to extend coverage of the Fair Labor Standards Act to the retail trades.
Retail Clerks Advocate 62 (July 1959), 5.

portion of the retail labour market would have to be determined to calculate the total number of retail workers who were union members.

Still, a rough estimate of union density can be gleaned from anecdotal evidence. In 1953 an independent researcher, Raulston Zundel, estimated that 476,000, or just under 10 per cent of the 4.9 million non-managerial employees in American retail, were union members.⁸ By 1968 that figure had grown to approximately 950,000 retail union members out of 7.5 million nonsupervisory workers, so just over 12 per cent of those eligible were unionised.⁹ The minimal growth in density possibly reflects the expansion of retail sector employment in the post-war years, which provided a continually expanding field of potential members; no matter how fast the unions grew it was never fast enough. (See Table 6.2.)

In Britain USDAW estimated in 1947 that only five per cent of employees in private, non Co-operative, retail and wholesale businesses were organised.¹⁰ Given that the retail labour force continued to grow while USDAW membership stagnated, it can be assumed that retail union density in Britain dropped even further in the 1950s and early '60s, particularly in the quickly expanding department and variety store trades. (See Table 6.3.) The tentative conclusion then, is that while membership growth in the American unions helped to maintain relatively consistent union density in the three decades following the Second World War, membership stagnation in the British retail unions meant that union density in the retail trades steadily decreased.¹¹

Aggregate density figures obscure significant differences by trade. In 1966 nearly 40 per cent of non-supervisory employees in American food stores were organised, compared with about 10 per cent of department store workers.¹² Although there are no similar statistics for the British trades, the preponderance of grocery workers in the highly organised Co-operative stores, and USDAW's growing strength in the chain supermarket stores in the late twentieth century, suggests a similar contrast between organisation in grocery as compared to dry

⁸ Zundel, 'Conflict and Co-operation,' 305.

⁹ Estey, 'The Retail Clerks,' 53-56.

¹⁰ P. C. Hoffman, 'The Five-Year Million,' *ND* 1 (26 July 1947), 275.

¹¹ The exception for USDAW was the temporarily increased membership realised over the course of the 1970s, but lost after 1980. 'USDAW Membership Figures,' 1977-2000, provided by USDAW Research Department.

¹² Estey, 'The Retail Clerks,' 57-58.

Table 6.2. American Retail Employment Growth, 1929-1967

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Retail</u>	<u>Dept. Stores</u>	<u>Variety Stores</u>
1929	4,286,516	543,836	167,058
1933	2,703,325	365,936	163,002
1935	3,898,258	492,846	177,221
1939	4,821,806	637,749	239,341
1948	6,918,061	843,740	345,812
1954	7,124,331	735,138	347,997
1958	7,911,081	807,898	340,422
1963	8,410,199	970,956	325,265
1967	9,380,616	1,175,402	297,346
Total growth	119%	116%	78%
Growth 1948-1967*	36%	39%	- 14%

*Rough comparisons can be made with total growth in Table 6.3

Source: US Bureau of the Census, *Historical Abstracts of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*, Edited by Susan B. Carter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Table 6.3. British Retail Employment Growth, 1950-1971

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Retail</u>	<u>Dept. Stores</u>	<u>Variety Stores</u>
1950	2,392,226	129,304	61,274
1961	2,524,084	181,757	130,988
1971	2,579,259	181,567	131,814
Total growth	8%	40%	115%

Source: Dept. of Industry, Business Statistics Office, *Report on the Census of Distribution and Other Services, 1971* (London: HM Stationary Office, 1975), 1/15.

goods employment. Even in 1970 USDAW's membership was 51 per cent Co-operative employees, 13 per cent private trade shopworkers, and 36 per cent other non-retail workers.¹³ This raises the important question of why union efforts seemed so much more successful in some trades than others.

Evidence on department and variety store organisation is even less concrete than for overall membership, but suggests differential outcomes for the unions within these fields as well. The RWDSU had jurisdiction over a wide range of workers in the retail trades, but the union's base was always in department stores, and later variety stores. In 1954 Marten Estey, an economist, put department store membership of the RWDSU at 25 per cent of its total retail membership; the union's solid variety store membership would have pushed this proportion even higher. However, even though the RWDSU was more heavily dependent on its department and variety store membership than the other shopworkers' unions, in 1954 it had only about 20,000 department store members, roughly half the number claimed by the RCIA.¹⁴

In the same year department store employees constituted only 16 per cent of the RCIA's retail membership, compared with food store employees who accounted for 61 per cent of the union's total membership.¹⁵ By 1962 the RCIA Research Department reported that only 12 per cent of its members worked in department or variety stores, despite the fact that these employees constituted just over 18 per cent of the total retail labour market.¹⁶ These RCIA figures give rise to two conclusions: first, department store employees were underrepresented in RCIA membership compared with their position in the retail labour market; and secondly, the RCIA was significantly more effective in organising the grocery trade than department and variety stores.

Of the three unions, USDAW had the most difficulty in the department and variety store trades. In 1965 the private retail trade, including grocery and specialty stores, accounted for only 13 per cent of USDAW's total membership,

¹³ 'USDAW Membership Figures', 1965-1988, provided by USDAW Research Department, Aug. 2003.

¹⁴ Estey, 'Patterns of Union Membership,' 560.

¹⁵ Estey, 'Patterns of Union Membership,' 560.

¹⁶ Michael Harrington, *The Retail Clerks* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1962), 2. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employee Earnings in Retail Trade*, Bulletin No. 1338-8 (Washington, D.C., June 1961).

with Co-operative and production employees constituting the remainder.¹⁷ Dry goods stores would only have provided a fraction of even that small portion of private trade retail members. USDAW had many members in the Co-operative department stores, but held only a handful of contracts with private department and variety stores. The key contracts in this area were those with Lewis's department stores, Owen Owen department store, and Littlewoods. Between 1961 and 1965 USDAW began to make some headway with the House of Fraser and Woolworth's, although specific membership details for these stores are difficult to locate.¹⁸

Geographic diversity was an important caveat in national organisation rates, particularly in America. Together, the RCIA, the RWDSU and myriad other unions with small retail memberships had organised only about 10 per cent of salespeople in department stores by the late 1960s.¹⁹ However, this national figure conceals regional diversities. While the American unions held contracts with department stores and many chain store branches in the Midwest and South by mid-century, their dry goods memberships were concentrated in New York, Boston, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, and Seattle, leading to substantially higher organisation rates in these cities. For example, by 1950 all six of Pittsburgh's major department stores were fully or near fully organised in both selling and non-selling departments. In the same year, 11 of Manhattan and Brooklyn's 14 major department stores were fully organised, even after the reshuffle resulting from the RWDSU's 1948 crisis.²⁰ Credit for these high unionisation rates in major urban areas lies not with the RCIA and RWDSU alone, but also with the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, the Building Service Employees' International Union, the Teamsters, independent retail unions, and other AFL-CIO-affiliated unions with minor retail membership who were largely responsible for organising non-selling employees.²¹

¹⁷ 'USDAW Membership Figures', 1965-1988, provided by USDAW Research Department, Aug. 2003.

¹⁸ Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 275-276.

¹⁹ Ronald D. Michman, 'A Survey of Unionization Trends in Department Stores,' *JR* 43 (Spring 1967), 17-24, 57.

²⁰ Helen Baker and Robert R. France, *Personnel Administration and Labor Relations in Department Stores: An Analysis of Developments and Practices* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1950), 106-108, Appendix.

²¹ Estey, 'Patterns of Union Membership.' Baker and France, *Personnel Administration*, 100-106.

The sum of these membership and union density statistics raises two major questions. First, what accounts for the differential success the three major shopworkers' unions had in organising retail employees generally, and department and variety store workers in particular, given their similar approaches to recruiting and maintaining union loyalty? Secondly, why did these unions together have such difficulty securing higher union density in the retail labour market and in the dry goods sector in particular? Some answers to these questions will be provided through examination of the following four issues: broader historical trends in the British and American labour movements; the nature of the retail labour market; differences in union recruitment and bargaining strategies; and problems with union democracy.

The Broader Context: International and Inter-sectoral Differences

Chris Wrigley and Michael Goldfield have challenged the argument that the late-twentieth century decline of British and American trade unionism was largely a result of the increase in non-union service sector labour and simultaneous decrease in the highly-unionised industrial labour market. However, both based their arguments on the increase in post-war white collar unionism, which was in large part a result of organisation of public sector government employees. Outside the public service sector unions, membership growth and improvements in union density were much less dramatic.²² The increase in retail labour in the post-war years, combined with the near static retail union density rates in America and declining density rates in Britain were clearly part of this broader private sector trend. Before going into the specifics of retail unionism then, there are some basic contextual factors common to the private trade service unions in general that need to be addressed in order to explain comparatively low union density rates in the private service sector overall in the post-war years.

After the war service sector unions faced the challenge of improving union density rates in economic contexts that were significantly different from those in

²² Goldfield, *The Decline of Organized Labor*, 115-152, esp. 144-145. Wrigley, *British Trade Unions*, 21-23, 27-28. See also Fraser, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, 237-239; W. W. Knox, *Industrial Nation: Work, Culture and Society in Scotland, 1800-Present* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1999), 280-295. On changes in the post-war British labour market, see Christopher M. Law, 'Employment and industrial structure'; and Rosemary Crompton, 'Non-manual Labour,' in James Obelkevich and Peter Catterall (Eds.), *Understanding Post-war British Society* (London: Routledge, 1994), 85-98; 99-115.

which the industrial unions had secured their high rates of union membership. In both Britain and America, the industrial unions grew most during periods of relative, but not extreme, economic insecurity: from the beginning of recovery in 1933/34, during the Second World War, in the years immediately following the war (when many believed the Depression would recur), and again in Britain in the 1970s under conditions of high inflation.²³ The retail unions also grew most in these periods. The RCIA and RWDSU both saw dramatic growth between the late 1930s and the late 1940s. USDAW's membership grew most during the inter-war years, chiefly in the Co-ops, and again more broadly in the 1970s.

However, while industrial employment stabilised in both Britain and America following the Second World War, retail and service sector employment continued to grow steadily in Britain and dramatically in America. (See Tables 6.2 and 6.3 above.) In effect, the industrial unions had simply to maintain membership figures during the more 'affluent' decades of the 1950s and '60s in order to maintain union density. In contrast, in these periods of greater economic stability, the retail and other service sector unions had to expand their membership greatly in order to maintain or improve union density rates.

Changes in the relationships between trade unionists and their national governments in post-war Britain and America constituted an additional fundamental difference between industrial and service sector organisation. In both countries, increased government involvement in trade union affairs restricted organising efforts in the post-war years. In America the height of union organising fell between the Wagner Act of 1935, which offered legal protection for unions, and the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, which severely curtailed union recruitment and bargaining campaigns. The legal and political climate following the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act was exacerbated by Cold War anti-Communism, making for a climate even more hostile to trade union organisation from the 1950s.²⁴ In Britain, the trade unions were constrained by voluntary, and later statutory adherence to restrictive incomes policies under both Labour and

²³ Wrigley, *British Trade Unions*, 18-21. Goldfield, *Decline of Organized Labor*, 10. Robert H. Zieger, *American Workers American Unions* (London: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1994), 26-108.

²⁴ Goldfield, *Decline of Organized Labor*, 105-108, 182-189. Zieger, *American Workers, American Unions*, 108-114, 123-134. On anti-Communism, Bert Cochran, *Labor and Communism: The Conflict That Shaped American Unions* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1997). Patrick Renshaw, *American Labor and Consensus Capitalism, 1935-1990* (Jackson, Miss.: Univ. of Mississippi, 1991), 100-124.

Conservative governments from 1948 to 1950 and in the 1960s and 1970s.²⁵ Moreover, the accelerated development of the British welfare state from 1945 to 1951 further shifted basic individual security from voluntarist bodies like trade unions to the State.²⁶ Less able to offer health benefits or higher real wages as distinct 'selling features' to potential members, British unions were limited in the extent to which they could make substantial instrumentalist appeals to personal security in order to attract potential members. Again, these political and legal frameworks inhibited more dramatic growth in union membership in the 1950s and '60s, with differential effects on the stabilised industrial labour market and the expanding service sector labour market at that time.

The remainder of this chapter will focus on explaining consistently low union density rates in the retail trades, and comparative differences in success rates among the three major British and American shopworkers' unions. However, this analysis must be continually set against broader trends in post-war service sector unionism. Comparatively lower union density rates in the private (non-government) service sectors in both Britain and America arguably had as much to do with the economic, political and legal contexts in which the service sector unions were trying to expand as with factors particular to those unions. Indeed, the RCIA's experience of dramatic membership growth in a context of near static union density rates is a prime example of service sector unions' difficulty increasing their stronghold in the British and American labour markets in the post-war years. That said, factors particular to the retail trade and to each of the major shopworkers' unions help to explain further trends in retail union membership.

'Cinderellas of Industry'²⁷: The Retail Labour Market

In their organisational drives, the major shopworkers' unions faced many challenges not necessarily common to other trades. The three most important were the atomistic dispersal of retail businesses and therefore employees, the national multi-firm model increasingly common in retail from the 1920s, and the

²⁵ Wrigley, *British Trade Unions*, 55-66.

²⁶ On the development of the welfare state in the immediate post-war years, see Derek Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State: A History of Social Policy Since the Industrial Revolution*, 3rd Edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 245-264.

²⁷ 'N.U.D.A.W., New Year, New Union,' *ND* 26 (28 Dec. 1946), 485.

high labour turnover characteristic of post-war retail employment. However, while these factors help to explain low organisation rates in the retail sector as a whole, their explanatory power with regard to comparatively low rates of unionisation in department and variety stores in particular is fairly limited. In effect, analysis of low unionisation in the department and variety store trades must also take into account the predominance of women and part-time workers in post-war British and American retail, and the 'white collar' psychology commonly attributed to service sector workers.

Small stores, corporate structure and labour turnover

The single most significant factor holding down retail union density rates through the entire twentieth century was the dominance of small stores in both the grocery and dry goods trades. In America in 1948 only 7.7 per cent of retail stores employed more than ten paid employees. Similarly, in Britain in 1971 only 8.6 per cent of shops engaged more than ten people.²⁸ The prevalence of small stores in the retail trades posed both economic and social problems for the unions. Economically, it was virtually impossible for the unions to reach a large number of small shops, given their geographic distance from each other and the disproportionate amount of human and material resources required for recruiting the small number of employee members each store offered. Socially, the major barrier was the close paternalistic relationship and strong loyalties between small shop owners and their employees. In such shops employees and owners often shared managerial tasks and did not necessarily differ significantly from each other in economic status.²⁹ Although all of the unions tried, and sometimes succeeded at various times to gain membership in small stores, in general the half of the retail labour market employed in such shops remained permanently out of reach of the shopworkers' unions.

Not surprisingly, unions tended to focus on the small minority of stores with large numbers of employees. In 1948, fewer than one per cent of stores in America accounted for over 25 per cent of the retail labour market. (See Figure

²⁸ US Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1954. Dept. of Industry and Business, Statistics Office, *Report on the Census of Distribution and Other Services, 1971* (London: HMSO, 1975), 1/61.

²⁹ Marten S. Estey, 'The Strategic Alliance as a Factor in Union Growth,' *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 9 (Oct. 1955), 43-44. Estey, 'The Retail Clerks,' 60-61.

6.2.) Similarly, in Britain in 1971, less than one per cent of stores accounted for nearly 19 per cent of the retail labour market. (See Figure 6.3) Among this small number of very large stores were the department and variety stores of interest to this study. Compared to the small shop with few employees, the large department stores, employing up to 10,000 workers in a single city block, offered union organisers more promising industrial-like recruitment grounds. However, the social problems of the department store in many ways replicated the challenges of small shops. As discussed in Chapter Four, selling departments often functioned as 'a collection of small stores under one roof'. The diversity of merchandise, wage structures and work group dynamics among individual selling departments deterred identification across departmental lines. The lack of identification between selling and non-selling departments was even more tangible. One explanation for the relatively low rates of union organisation in department stores, as compared to large supermarket-style grocery stores then, is that with fewer job categories and a lack of distinct departments, the grocery stores standardised the workforce to a much greater extent than was ever the case in department stores.³⁰

Chain variety and discount department stores were expanding at mid-century, however, and these provided retail unions in both Britain and America with a more industrial- or supermarket-type workforce than other dry goods stores. The open floor plans in these stores, standardised managerial systems and wages structures, and increasing use of self service tended to rationalise shop work and standardise the work experience across both selling and non-selling departments. Furthermore, the unions were often poised to move in to organise new branch stores before employers had time to cultivate strong loyalties from their employees.³¹ This was a less effective strategy with the new suburban branches built by the established department stores, because loyal employees from city centre flagship stores were often transferred to work in the suburban branches from opening day.³²

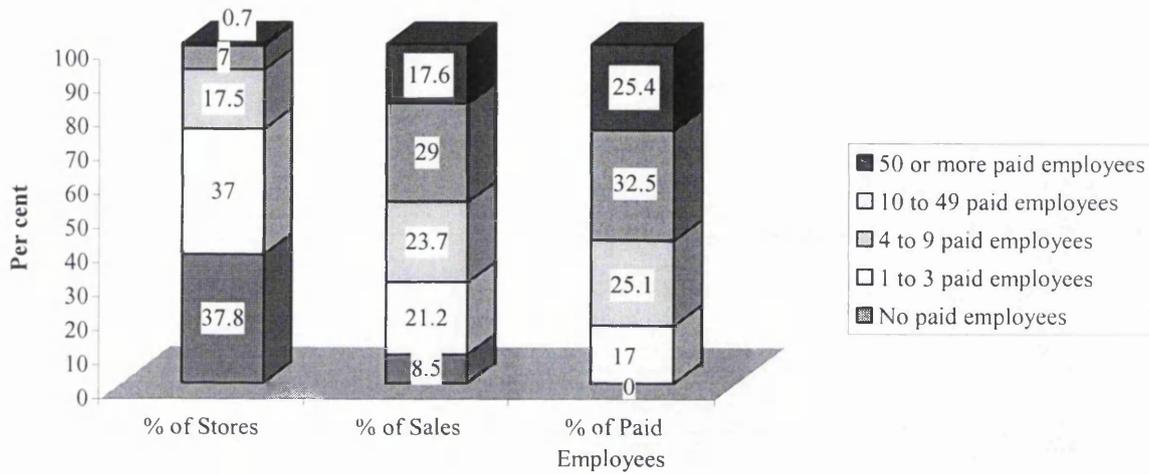
Despite the advantages for unions of organising in chain stores, the national multi-firm corporate structure common to British and American chain

³⁰ Estey, 'The Retail Clerks,' 76-77.

³¹ Estey, 'The Retail Clerks,' 77-78.

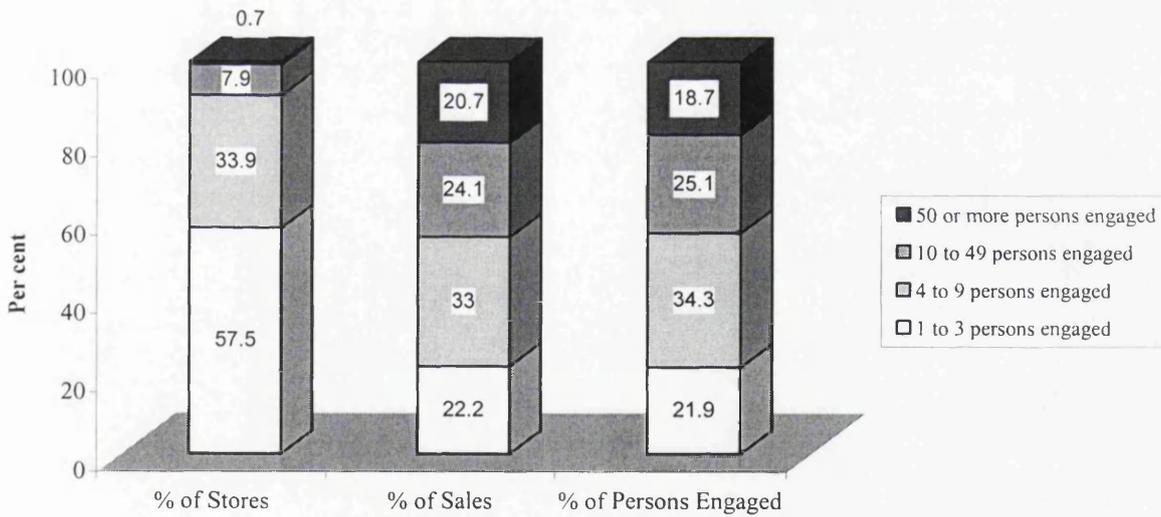
³² 'An Invitation to Our Store Family,' *SC* 34 (Feb. 1952), 1. 'Onwards and Upwards to the New Wilmington Store,' *SC* 34 (Aug. 1952), 4. 'Plan Larger Suburban Store for Seattle,' *FG* 22 (14

Figure 6.2. Distribution of American Retail Stores, Sales, and Paid Employees According to Number of Paid Employees in Store, 1948



Source: US Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1954

Figure 6.3. Distribution of British Retail Stores, Sales and Persons Engaged According to Number of Persons Engaged in Store, 1971



Source: UK Department of Industry, Business Statistics Office, *Report on the Census of Distribution and Other Services, 1971* (London: HM Stationery Office, 1975), 1/61.

variety and department stores such as Marks & Spencers, Woolworths, Montgomery Wards, JC Penneys and Wal-Mart, posed a different and particular set of problems. The economic power of relatively unskilled shopworkers vis-à-vis their employers was low enough to prevent the unions from having a significant hold over employers even in a single store if less than the entire workforce were organised. This difficulty was multiplied exponentially with regard to the national chains where, as one observer put it, 'A strike against a Montgomery Ward store in Boston will not close down the store in St. Louis.'³³

Given the relatively impermeable economic strength of the regional or national chain, the only effective strategic union actions involved either a strike by the warehouse or delivery workers at the heart of a chain store business, a co-ordinated walk-out in multiple stores, or use of the national boycott as practiced by the RCIA in the 1950s and '60s. The first strategy sometimes worked, as with the initial success of the Montgomery Wards drives during the Second World War.³⁴ The co-ordinated strike sometimes worked as well, as with USDAW's strike against Woolworth's stores in South Wales and Monmouthshire in 1961.³⁵ However, the success of the boycott depended on the co-operation of notoriously unreliable and unpredictable consumers.³⁶

On the whole, the shopworkers' unions depended on chain store employers to negotiate willingly with the unions. In effect, the American unions were more successful with the comparatively sympathetic JC Penney stores (particularly where these stores joined in negotiations with employers' associations as in San Francisco), but had more limited success over the long term with anti-union Sears stores in the US.³⁷ Similarly, USDAW, although successful with the Co-ops, never made much headway in the face of anti-union policies at Marks & Spencer's and the House of Fraser in Britain. Their greatest gains in the

Feb. 1955), 1. 'New Old Orchard Store Will Open October 22nd,' *FG* 24 (8 Oct. 1956), 1. 'Flag-Raising Ceremony Opens Field's New Store at Mayfair,' *FG* 26 (12 Jan. 1959), 1.

³³ Harrington, *Retail Clerks*, 11. Estey, 'The Strategic Alliance,' 44-45.

³⁴ Estey, 'The Strategic Alliance,' 49-50.

³⁵ 'Woolworth's Dispute,' *ND* 15 (9 Dec. 1961), 771-772. Frank Glover, 'Woolworth's Strike Holds Lessons For Us All,' *ND* 15 (23 Dec. 1961), 824-825. Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 275.

³⁶ On the historical unreliability of consumer support for union action, see Estey, 'The Strategic Alliance,' 45-46.

³⁷ For example, "'All-Out" Drive to Organize Retail Store Employees Launched by California Local,' *RCA* 46 (Nov.-Dec. 1943), 6. 'San Francisco Labor Council Calls for Boycott of Sears,' *RCA* 63 (July 1960), 6.

private retail trades were with Littlewoods and Woolworth's from the 1960s: by 1975 USDAW claimed 13,000 members among Littlewoods staff, and by 1977, the union had about 10,000 members in Woolworth's stores.³⁸

The concentration of retail union membership in large stores made the unions susceptible to the vagaries of the retail business and labour markets. When department stores with large numbers of union members closed—as did Wanamakers, Hearn's, and Saks-34th Street department stores in Manhattan, Frank and Seder's and Snellenburg's stores in Philadelphia, and other major American department stores in the 1960s—the unions involved lost significant portions of their membership.³⁹ Furthermore, as demonstrated in Chapter 4, the retail unions were as vulnerable to the high labour turnover rates in retail as employers. Between 1950 and 1963, USDAW recruited over 1,277,000 new members, but 1,265,000 members (99 per cent of gains) lapsed during the same period. In the same time frame the national union suffered from annual desertion rates fluctuating between 25 and 30 per cent of membership, closely mirroring rates of labour turnover in the retail trades.⁴⁰ A survey of lapsed USDAW members in 1963 showed that less than two per cent of members left the union as a result of dissatisfaction with the union. Twenty-nine per cent reported having given up union membership because they gave up employment altogether, while a further 56 per cent took new employment outside USDAW's jurisdiction.⁴¹ As a result of high labour turnover in retail then, the large majority of union membership losses were not directly avoidable.

Women, part-time and racial minority workers

Factors over which the shopworkers' unions had very little control—such as the geographical dispersion of potential membership, changes in retail corporate structure, and high labour turnover—contributed significantly to the challenges of union organisation in the retail trades. Indeed, the potential for higher union density rates was severely curtailed by retail working conditions from the outset, before the unions even entered the picture. The unions also had very little control over the fact that the retail trades were increasingly dominated by women and

³⁸ Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 330, 367-368.

³⁹ Estey, 'The Retail Clerks,' 75.

⁴⁰ Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 202-203, 252.

part-time workers over the course of the post-war years, but these were at least variables around which unions could negotiate. (See Table 6.4.) The major British and American shopworkers' unions made overtures to both women and part-time employees in organisational drives and union politics, and were increasingly successful in their attempts to secure *fundamental loyalties* from such workers. However, the unions' tendencies to neglect the issues most important to female and part-time members led to problems with soliciting and maintaining *functional loyalties* among these members. This was particularly problematic in the department and variety stores where both women and part-time workers were highly prevalent. (See Table 6.5.)

The increasing prevalence of women in the service sector and the labour market generally has been an oft-cited explanation for the gradual decline of unionism in Britain and America in the latter half of the twentieth century.⁴² Shopworkers' unions were hardly immune from the challenges of recruiting and maintaining female membership. The high labour turnover in department and variety stores that was one of the major stumbling blocks for the RCIA, RWDSU and USDAW was in part a factor of the high percentage of women in those trades. But the story is much more complex than that. Membership statistics suggest that the major retail unions were increasingly successful in their attempts to solicit *fundamental loyalties* from women workers. The percentage of female membership in all of the major shopworkers' unions grew over time, even as the percentage of women in the retail labour market grew, so that by the end of the 1970s the unions were more closely representative of the general gender distribution in retail employment. Between 1938 and 1975 female membership in USDAW doubled from 30 to 60 per cent of membership, where it remains today.⁴³ By 1956 one of America's most militant retail unions, Macy's Local 1-S, claimed 80 per cent female membership.⁴⁴ Through the 1940s, '50s, and '60s, the predominantly female RCIA was one of the fastest growing unions in the AFL-

⁴¹ Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 255-256.

⁴² Although Michael Goldfield disagreed with this proposition, a concise argument of the position can be found in Goldfield, *Decline of Organized Labor*, 126-127, 130-131, 135-137. Fraser, *History of British Trade Unionism*, 234, 237.

⁴³ Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 319-321. 'USDAW Membership Figures,' 1977-2000, provided by USDAW Research Department.

⁴⁴ 'Strike Unity Set Shining Example', *LI-SN* 7 (15 May 1956), 1. 79 % by 1952, Debby Valencia, 'Dream of 35-Hour Work Week Can Become a Reality in '52', *LI-SN* 3 (15 Jan. 1952), 2.

Table 6.4. Percentage of Part-Time Employees in Retail, US and UK, 1950-1971

<u>Year</u>	<u>US*</u>			<u>UK**</u>		
	<u>Retail Total</u>	<u>Dept. Stores</u>	<u>Variety Stores</u>	<u>Retail Total</u>	<u>Dept. Stores</u>	<u>Variety Stores</u>
1950	--	--	--	20	8	20
1961	--	29	38	26	19	39
1971	--	--	--	38	31	41

*Less than 35 hours per week, non-supervisory workers only

**Less than 30 hours per week, supervisory and non-supervisory

Sources: Board of Trade, *Census of Distribution and Other Services, 1950*, Vol. 1 (London: HMSO, 1954), 16. Board of Trade, *Report on the Census of Distribution and Other Services, 1961* (London: HMSO, 1963-64), 1/48, 1/55. Department of Industry, Business Statistics Office, *Report on the Census of Distribution and Other Services, 1971*, Part 1 (London: HMSO, 1975), 1/61, 1/73. U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employee Earnings in Retail Trade, June 1961*, Bulletin 1338-8 (Washington, D.C., 1962), 12.

Table 6.5. Gender and Part-time Distribution in the American Retail Trades for Non-supervisory Workers, 1961

<u>Type of Store</u>	<u>% of Retail</u>			
	<u>Labour Force</u>	<u>% Men</u>	<u>% Women</u>	<u>% Part-time*</u>
Department	13	30	70	29
Variety	5	11	89	38
Grocery	17	67	33	35
Apparel & accessories	10	33	67	30
Furniture, home furnishings, appliances	6	72	28	14
Automotive dealers	9	90	10	6
Drug & proprietary	6	41	59	37
Retail trade total	100	58	42	26**

*Less than 35 hours per week.

**Statistics not available for all retail trades, so this figure covers those trades for which statistics were available.

Source: US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 1338-8, June 1961. 'Earnings in Retail Trade, June 1961,' *Monthly Labor Review* (January 1963), 44-51.

CIO.⁴⁵ It seems, then, that the difficulty with organising new members in the dry goods trade was not so much a matter of gender per se, but a result of various other compounding factors characteristic of department and variety store employment.

Nevertheless, gender did play a significant role in union affairs. All of the shopworkers' unions expressed concern that women's *functional loyalties* to the union were more difficult to recruit and maintain than men's. Many local branches bemoaned their struggle to get women members to attend meetings, participate in education programmes, and engage in political activity. As the *New Dawn's* Editor bluntly put it, 'whilst 43 per cent. of [USDAW's] members are women, those women members are not responsible for 43 per cent. of Union activity.'⁴⁶ Comparing men's and women's union activities, union administrators tended to focus on the roles most closely related to union democracy.

One of the indicators the unions commonly used to measure women's involvement was the number of women in representative union positions. This produced predictably dire results. In 1940 only two of NUDAW's 66 Divisional Council seats were filled by women, despite the fact that women constituted a third of the union's membership at that time. Even by 1978, when women accounted for over 60 per cent of USDAW's membership, only one of every six Divisional Councillors was a woman. From 1947 until the late 1970s USDAW's National Executive Council rarely had more than one woman representative.⁴⁷ The American unions had similarly male-dominated Executive Councils. The Presidents of the RCIA, the RWDSU, and Macy's Local 1-S were male through the long post-war period. Even in 1977, after the height of the second-wave feminist movement, with women constituting well over half of the International membership, all of the RCIA's twenty-four Executive Board members were men.⁴⁸ (See Figures 6.4 and 6.5.) Women had a somewhat better showing in executive positions on local boards. However, the 1947 all-female Executive

⁴⁵ 'Membership Rises 4,800% in Two Decades,' *RCA* 58 (Nov. 1955), 2.

⁴⁶ 'Challenge to Britain—and Women,' *ND* 8 (16 Jan. 1954), 33.

⁴⁷ 'London Women's Conference,' *ND* 20 (20 July 1940), 343-344. Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 321-324.

⁴⁸ 'The RCIU Executive Board,' *RCA* 80 (Aug.-Sept. 1977), 38.

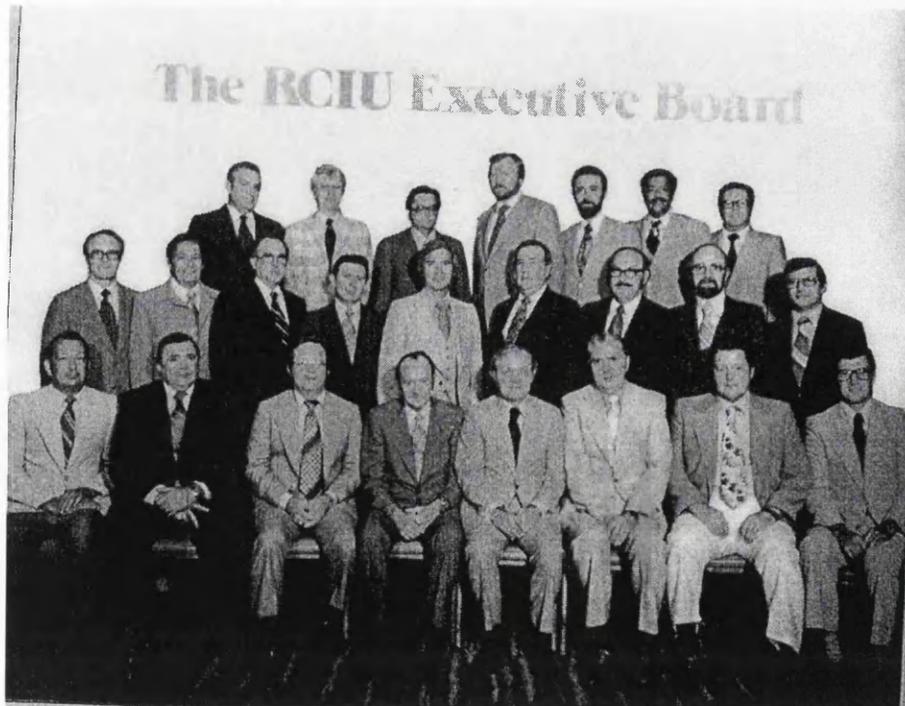
Figure 6.4. RCIA local membership, 1950

RCIA Movement Catching on in Tampa, Florida—Local Unions Have Won Three Elections, Signed First Pact



RCIA Local 1634, representing employees of H. L. Green Company's variety store in Tampa, Florida. The one man in the photo is the Local President.
Retail Clerks Advocate 53 (July 1950), 11.

Figure 6.5. RCIA national leadership, 1977



Retail Clerks Advocate 80 (Aug. – Sept. 1977), 38.

Board of RCIA Department Store Local 1521 in Cleveland, Ohio was notable precisely because it was an aberration from the norm.⁴⁹

There is evidence to suggest that women played a much more significant role in union activity outside elected positions. From the inter-war years in America, women were often at the heart of industrial conflict in department and variety stores. The sit-down strikes in dozens of major department and chain stores across the country in 1937 were a prime example. In Detroit 110 Woolworth's women employees 'camped out' in their store for days in protest against the low wages they received. In New York City the majority of women sit-down strikers removed from a Woolworth's store by police one evening marched into the store the next morning and stood at their counters, refusing to serve customers.⁵⁰ In the New York City Klein's and Orbach's department store strikes of 1934/35 the saleswomen involved did not shy away from creative subversion and public militancy in their attempts to win union recognition, higher wages and shorter working hours.⁵¹

The Second World War did little to temper this militancy. Photos of national delegate meetings for both British and American retail unions recorded overwhelmingly male crowds at such events in the immediate post-war years. However, pictures of local branch meetings, picket lines, and branch social activities demonstrated that women were responsible for a great deal of the grassroots activity that kept the unions functioning on a day-to-day basis.⁵² The RCIA Local 1401 survey from 1969 revealed that among the union's department and discount store members, women were just as likely as men to join their Active Ballot Club, and were more likely than men to attend branch meetings.⁵³ Such

⁴⁹ 'Executive Board of Department Store Local 1521,' *RCA* 50 (April 1947), 29.

⁵⁰ George Kirstein, *Stores and Unionism: A Study of the Growth of Unionism in Dry Goods and Department Stores* (New York: Fairchild Publications, 1950), 63-74. Karen Plunkett-Powell, *Remembering Woolworth's: A Nostalgic History of the World's Most Famous Five-and-Dime* (New York: St. Martin's, 2001), 219-223.

⁵¹ Daniel Opler, 'Monkey Business in Union Square: A Cultural Analysis of the Klein's-Orbach's Strikes of 1934-5,' *Journal of Social History* 36 (2002), 149-164.

⁵² Photos of meetings, picket lines and social activities appeared regularly in the *Retail Clerks Advocate*, *RWDS Employee*, *Macy's Local I-S News*, and less regularly but with the same effect in the *New Dawn*.

⁵³ 57 respondents identified themselves as women, 16 as men. 11 women and 3 men (both 19 per cent) reported joining their ABC. 23 women (40 per cent) and 5 men (31 per cent) reported attending at least some union meetings. The questionnaire file also includes about 300 questionnaires completed by supermarket members. See questions 2, 4, 10, 30, Union Opinion Questionnaires of Retail Clerks Union—Local 1401, 'Surveys, c. 1970-75' Box M85-312, MAD2M/12/F7, SHSW.

evidence suggests that on the whole, many women members did have strong *functional loyalties* to their unions, but expressed those loyalties in ways not readily measured by male union executives. (See Figures 6.6 and 6.7.)

Even when tempered by evidence demonstrating that the shopworkers' unions were fairly successful in their attempts to recruit *fundamental* and *functional loyalties* from women, it is still problematic that women members were underrepresented in the unions' democratic institutions. The question that arises, then, is whether or not the shopworkers' unions actively courted women's *functional loyalties* in ways that would foster greater interest in the unions' representative institutions. The evidence here is somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, the major unions began to realise during the inter-war and WWII years that women were quickly closing in on men's majority in the unions' membership base, and therefore focused more directly on improving women's union loyalties. In that direction NUDAW established a Women's Department in 1917 to increase women's numerical and active membership in the union. From the inter-war years NUDAW held women's conferences for its female members to discuss the role women could play in the labour movement and in socialist politics. The *New Dawn* diligently reported these conferences for readers, and often published other columns for women on political themes written by the union's women organisers.⁵⁴ In 1948 the RCIA *Advocate* also began to run a 'Women's Affairs' column written by a woman for women members, reporting on political and industrial developments relevant to women as workers.⁵⁵

At the same time, however, the RCIA and USDAW persisted in privileging male members' interests above women's. When women returned in large numbers to the retail trades during the Second World War, NUDAW courted women's loyalties, imploring them to be more active in organising and bargaining campaigns. However, the union's consistent appeal to women during the Second World War was not just to join the union for their own sake, but to see:

that the whole strength of the organised Labour Movement, which has been so arduously built up by the sacrifices of their menfolk in

⁵⁴ Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 322. For examples of women's conference reports, see Trebor Renrut, 'Women's Conference,' *ND* 20 (3 Aug. 1940), 370-371; 'Women in the Union: Appeal by Scottish Conference,' *ND* 25 (10 March 1945), 67. On political issues, 'A Call to Women,' *ND* 20 (20 July 1940), 351.

⁵⁵ Appropriately, the first column in the *Advocate's* new 'Women's Affairs' column was on equal pay, *RCA* 51 (June 1948), 28.

Figure 6.6. Women on the picket line, 1943



Women members of RCIA Local 367 of Tacoma, Washington on strike to uphold union shop conditions in their Montgomery Ward store.
Retail Clerks International Advocate 46 (Sept. – Oct. 1943), 5.

Figure 6.7. Women on the picket line, 1956



RCIA Whittier, California local organisers picketed to promote a consumer boycott of their local Montgomery Ward store.
Retail Clerks Advocate 59 (Aug. 1956), 6.

the past, is so maintained that when the men return from a victory which will ensure the freedom of democratic movements throughout the world, they will find the Movement made yet more virile by their women comrades standing shoulder to shoulder in the ranks.⁵⁶

NUDAW's appeals to women at women's conferences and in the pages of the *New Dawn* were made with the constant proviso, 'while the men are away'. Moreover, the union's war-time agreement with Co-operative societies explicitly stated that 'changes in sex and skill composition of staffs necessitated by war-time labour shortage shall be of a temporary character' and provided that 'there shall be a return to the *status quo*' as soon as possible following the war, a provision the Executive Council later enforced.⁵⁷

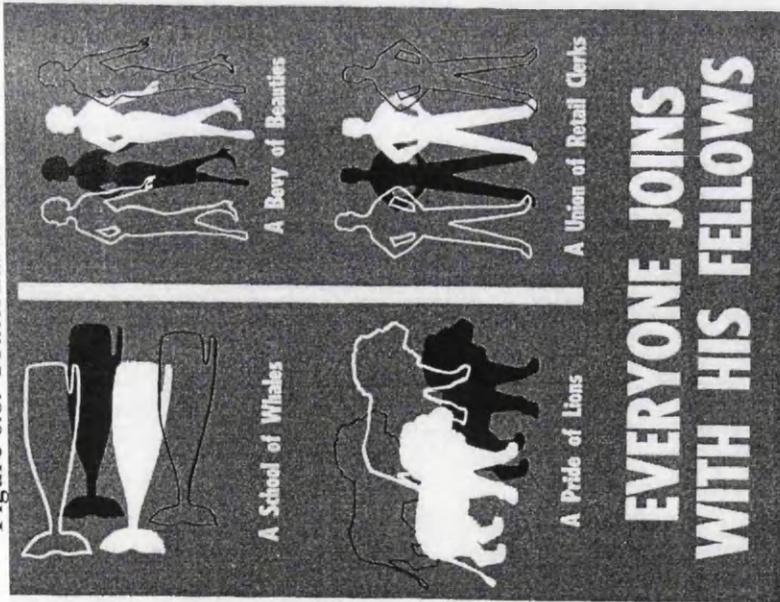
From their first introduction to the local or national union, it would likely have been evident to many women that their male counterparts were actually considered the heart of retail unionism. Although the RCIA and USDAW eventually published recruitment posters appealing directly to women as shopworkers, both unions continued to appeal primarily to men, even through the 1960s. (See Figures 6.8 and 6.9.) A labour woman's critique of the RCIA's much-hailed recruitment film, 'A Watch For Joe', noted the fact that the film was directed primarily toward the male shopworker. She advised that the union should put more effort into understanding and appealing to the women workers who constituted the majority of the union's potential membership base.⁵⁸

It probably did not help new women members to identify directly with the union as a representative of their interests when the majority of the RCIA and USDAW's professional organisers were men. In 1953 at USDAW's Manchester Division Conference the man responsible for organising new members in the region gave a speech characterising the belief that women would find freedom and enhanced rights through employment as a 'fallacy'. He suggested that better pay and State aid should be encouraged in order to allow married women to stay at home. More than the speech itself, the fact that the Area Organiser's comments

⁵⁶ 'Editorial Comments,' *ND* 20 (22 June 1940), 291.

⁵⁷ On appeals to women during the war: W.H.B., 'Welcoming the Women During the War,' *ND* 20 (3 Aug. 1940), 382. E Martin, 'Women in War-Time,' *ND* 20 (22 June 1940), 300-301. Regarding Agreement No. 390 providing for maintenance of sex and skill composition in the Co-operative trades, 'Reinstatement Problems: Executive Council's Guidance to Branches,' *ND* 25 (29 Dec. 1945), 418.

Figure 6.8. Fraternal brotherhood



The advantages of group strength are obvious. Every member can help his union become stronger. Urge unorganized retail store employees to reap the dividends of membership in the Retail Clerks International Association—the only union exclusively devoted to their welfare.

Retail Clerks Advocate 64 (March 1961), 34.

Figure 6.9. USDAW's appeal to women shopworkers



New Dawn 8 (19 June 1954), 411.

were received with no apparent sense of alarm from other delegates demonstrated that the union had not yet come to full realisation of the permanence of single and married women in the British labour market.⁵⁹ The RCIA at least demonstrated an increasing awareness of the importance of making unionism appealing to women over the course of the post-war years. However, in 1969, when the RCIA formed a Department Store Committee specifically for the purpose of recruiting members from the largely female department store workforce, all but two of the committee's members were men.⁶⁰ Perhaps the RWDSU's early successes in department and variety stores can be explained in part then, by the fact that the union commonly employed women organisers to recruit new members in such stores and directly targeted women workers in membership drives.⁶¹

The tendency for union executives to subordinate female members' interests to men's was best evidenced in wage disputes. From the inter-war period all of the major shopworkers' unions continually expressed their concern about issues of 'equal pay for equal work'. While some advocates of equal pay focused more on the 'rate for the job' and protecting men's wages, others, particularly women organisers, argued the benefits for women workers who had long suffered exploitation in many trades, including retail.⁶² Regardless of the rationale, both men and women stood to gain from equal pay clauses in union contracts, women by gaining higher rates, and men by preventing employers from undercutting the male rate with cheap female labour. The issue of equal pay was therefore a constant topic of discussion and resolutions at unions' district and national meetings, as a matter of principle and as a means for attracting women's loyalty to the union. Between 1930 and 1976 USDAW passed over forty resolutions calling for equal pay protection through contracts and legislation, and helped to keep the

⁵⁸ Sally Parker, 'Two New Labor Films,' *AFL Workers Education Bureau Newsletter*, 6, RCIA files M95-242, Box 1, Folder 5, SHSW.

⁵⁹ N. B. Capindale, 'New Era: Report of the Manchester Divisional Conference,' *ND* 7 (12 Sept. 1953), 599.

⁶⁰ 'RCIA Department Store Committee Is Named,' *RCA* 72 (March 1969), 3.

⁶¹ As in Flint, Michigan in 1940 where all of the union's Five & Ten Organizing Committee members responsible for organising variety store workers in the city were women. 'On the Job,' *RWE* 3 (29 June 1940), 4. In New York, the RWDSU were assisted in their attempts to organise women workers by the New York League for Women Shoppers. 'Consider the Woolworth Workers,' *RWE* 3 (29 June 1940), 4, 16. Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 35.

⁶² There were many articles and opinion columns on the topic of equal pay, but these typify the main arguments: 'Equal Pay for Equal Work: Yorkshire Women Members in Conference,' *ND* 24

issue at the top of the TUC's agenda.⁶³ Likewise, in America the RCIA and RWDSU executive boards encouraged local branches to pursue equal pay from at least as early as the Second World War. The RCIA also sent political activists and union executives to Congress in the early 1960s to lobby for federal equal pay legislation.⁶⁴

While 'equal pay for equal work' remained at the top of shopworkers' political agendas through the post-war years, the political importance attached to the issue did not necessarily translate into direct action at the bargaining table. To be fair, there were persistent obstacles to securing equal pay at the local level without federal legislation. The low rates of unionisation in the retail trades made it difficult to secure legislative protection for organised and unorganised women. And where local unions did manage to win contractual equal pay clauses, they had to face the challenge posed by employers who deliberately created multiple titles for the same job—such as 'sales specialists' for men and 'general clerk' for women—to undermine the spirit of equal pay provisions.⁶⁵

That said, the unions sometimes directly impeded the progress of the equal pay campaign. During the Second World War, when NUDAW's bargaining strength was comparatively strong, both male and female union leaders continually held women themselves responsible for not engaging enough in union affairs to secure advances in women's wages. Instead of taking the opportunity at the start of the war to secure equal male and female wages for all workers in the Co-operative trade, NUDAW limited wage equality to female 'substitute labour' temporarily filling jobs previously held by men. Even that provision proved hard to enforce, because war-time labour shortages meant that job definitions had changed enough that women were rarely performing *exactly* the same work as the men they replaced.⁶⁶ In America, even through the 1950s, many RCIA locals

(1 Jan. 1944), 10-11. J. T. Price, 'Women and Wages: Why Differential Pay?' *ND* 24 (18 Nov. 1944), 376-377.

⁶³ Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 324, 327.

⁶⁴ 'Women's Equal Pay Act of 1945,' *RWDSE* 8 (Sept. 1945), 29. 'Equal Work Should Merit Equal Pay, RCIA Officials Tell Congress,' *RCA* 65 (May 1962), 7, 26. 'RCIA Urges Congress to Pass Strong Equal Pay Measure,' *RCA* 66 (May 1963), 5. 'Oregon Clerks Make Issue of Equal Pay for Equal Work,' 57 (Aug. 1954), 11.

⁶⁵ 'Employers Evade Equal Pay Law, RCIA State Body Says,' *RCA* 68 (Feb. 1965), 15.

⁶⁶ 'Percy Cottrell, General President, '1945—And the Days of Opportunity,' *ND* 25 (13 Jan. 1945), 2. 'Equal Pay and Equal Opportunity,' and 'And What I Think About It,' *ND* 25 (7 April 1945), 100-101. 'Report of Proceedings at the Twentieth Annual Delegate Meeting,' 1941, 4-6,

continued to agree to inferior wage rates for women members in contract negotiations.⁶⁷

By the early 1960s the RCIA had secured equal pay for women in principle in many of its larger contracts. It was aided by the inclusion of retail under the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1963, which legally undermined the basis for wage discrimination by gender in large American retail establishments.⁶⁸ In Britain, on the other hand, USDAW was still struggling in the 1960s to live up to the spirit of the equal pay agenda. USDAW's record in the dry goods private trade was particularly problematic. While the union had successfully secured significant increases in women's wages relative to men's in the Co-operative and grocery trades, women members in department stores fared little better in the post-war years than they had before World War II. In two of the main department store strongholds of the union, Lewis's and Owen Owen, female shop assistants earned 71.4 per cent of the wages received by their male counterparts in 1938, and only 72.1 per cent in 1960.⁶⁹

Union interference with advances in equal pay was sometimes even more direct. In 1963 a delegate at USDAW's annual conference proposed a resolution that called on the union's Executive Council to refuse any future increases in wages which did not help to close the gap between men's and women's wages. Despite decades of propaganda about the importance of equal pay provisions, when given this opportunity to address the issue directly, the Executive Council openly opposed the resolution. Defending this position, USDAW's General Secretary, Alfred Allen contended that if employers offered higher rates for men than women and the union refused to accept those rates, then male members would be upset with the union. In spite of the Executive's protests, the resolution narrowly passed. However, it was not until 1970 that the national union began to

USDAW Library. On the Substitute Labour agreement, 'Substituted Female Labour: The Agreement,' *ND* (31 Aug. 1940), 416.

⁶⁷ RCIA contract results were reported under 'Association News' in the *Advocate*. Some examples of contracts with wage differentials by sex: Local 1179 JC Penney store results, *RCA* 43 (Sept.-Oct. 1939), 21; Local 1119 covering JC Penney, Woolworths and department stores in San Rafael, CA, *RCA* 46 (Sept.-Oct. 1942), 20; 'Local 1188, Coos Bay Local Observes 15th Anniversary,' *RCA* 54 (Jan. 1951), 29.

⁶⁸ One of the earliest contracts with an equal pay clause to last beyond the war was between RCIA Local 905 in San Pedro, CA and J.C. Penney, J. J. Newberry, F. W. Woolworth and S.H. Kress in 1946, *RCA* 50 (Nov. 1946), 27. On the FLSA and wage discrimination, 'Equal Pay for Equal Work Guaranteed by New Law,' *RCA* 66 (Aug. 1963), 1.

⁶⁹ Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 324-328.

make substantial progress toward closing the wage gap between male and female members in contract negotiations, by which point the spur of state intervention was in position, with the Equal Pay Act passed in June 1970.⁷⁰

There are two general explanations for the overall failure of the shopworkers' unions to protect more directly the interests of women members when those interests were distinct from men's. First, all three unions increasingly tried to appeal to women as *consumers*, sometimes to the detriment of effort paid to women's interests as *producers*. From the late 1940s, the women's columns in union magazines that had previously been filled with political and labour news became more consumer oriented. Through the 1950s and '60s, the RCIA, RWDSU and USDAW all began new columns in their union journals offering women advice on fashion, home decorating, cooking, and hosting guests. Eventually these columns fully eclipsed the women's political columns in publication space.⁷¹ The *New Dawn* editor made this transition in part in response to a women's organiser's suggestion that potential women recruits and non-active women members might be more likely to read the union's publication if it included beauty and fashion tips.⁷² If the *New Dawn*'s readers were at all similar to the *Retail Clerks Advocate*'s audience, this suggestion was not far off the mark. In 1949 *Advocate* readers rated the consumer advice column, 'Your Dollar', second only to a column giving merchandise knowledge for better selling, and ahead of all the political columns in the magazine. This finding prompted the Editor to devote a full page to the consumer column starting in 1950.⁷³

The attention granted to women's interests as consumers pervaded recruitment campaigns as well. In 1955 USDAW supported the London's Trades Council recruitment event which combined traditional trade union propaganda with a fashion show, celebrity appearances and a gift ceremony honouring new brides with new tea sets. The union replicated this event in its own future recruitment campaigns.⁷⁴ On the one hand, the women's columns and women-

⁷⁰ Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 326-327.

⁷¹ The RWDSU was the first to have a consumer column exclusively for women: 'Strictly for the Girls,' *RWDSE* 9 (Nov. 1946). Other columns: Mary Mulloy, 'News for Women,' started in *ND* 7 (12 Sept. 1953), 603; 'Strictly for the Girls,' *RCA* 53 (Jan. 1950), 25. 'The Feminine Touch', *ND*, from 1955.

⁷² 'Letters to the Editor,' *ND* 8 (25 Sept. 1954), 639.

⁷³ 'Advocate Prize Awards,' *RCA*, 52 (Nov. 1949), 2-4.

⁷⁴ 'New Look in Trade Union Propaganda,' *ND* 9 (23 April 1955), 282. 'Fashion Display with a Difference,' *ND* 16 (6 Jan. 1962), 24.

oriented recruitment drives marked an important acknowledgement on the part of the unions that women had become a permanent part of the retail labour market to be appealed to on their own terms. On the other hand, by focusing on women as consumers, the shopworkers' unions tended to perpetuate the notion that most women in retail were simply working for 'pin money' to fund their families' increasingly affluent lifestyles. Although crucially important, the exclusive focus on wages for women as consumers meant that other matters, such as more liberal promotions policies to open new job opportunities for women, or seniority privileges for women who had to leave and later re-enter the job market, were often neglected.⁷⁵

A second explanation for why men's interests tended to eclipse women's is that union leaders often put the burden of responsibility for change on women themselves. At a NUDAW women's conference in 1940, Midlands Area Organiser, E. Martin, claimed that women's apathy in the union resulted from too many women looking at their job only 'as a period between school days and marriage'. Her explanation was oft-repeated by columnists in the *New Dawn* and by other British trade unions who simply considered women's lesser activity in unions a factor of life cycles and domestic responsibilities.⁷⁶ However, while women members also highlighted their domestic responsibilities as a complicating factor, they put the onus on the union to facilitate women's participation in union activities. For example, one female *New Dawn* correspondent suggested that, 'Perhaps the men would like to start a home help service?' to make it easier for women to attend meetings. 'What about it, comrades?', she challenged, invoking the union's own collectivist rhetoric.⁷⁷ This hinted at the problematic cycle in which the unions were caught: union administrators looked to women members to instigate action on their own behalf, while women members looked to the union to acknowledge their difficulties and create venues for action that would fit easily with family and other responsibilities.

⁷⁵ Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 327-328.

⁷⁶ 'London Women's Conference,' 343-344. 'The Appeal to Women,' *ND* 20 (28 Sept. 1940), 457. In 1954, a TUC Women's Advisory Committee survey of 40 unions with women members showed that USDAW was not alone in blaming women themselves for their lack of participation in union activities, 'Women in the Movement,' *ND* 8 (5 June 1954), 354, 356.

⁷⁷ 'Letters to the Editor,' *ND* 6 (5 Jan. 1952), 31. See responses to question 11, Union Opinion Questionnaires.

The difficulties the shopworkers' unions had with directly addressing women's issues mirrored the difficulty the unions experienced with recruiting and maintaining loyalties from part-time workers. This was not least a consequence of the fact that women were more often part-time workers than men in both Britain and America.⁷⁸ However, the matter of addressing the needs of part-time workers as distinct from full-time was a challenge for the unions in its own right. As part-time workers became an increasingly significant portion of the British and American retail labour markets with the move toward split shifts, later opening hours and five-day work weeks, it became important for the unions to address the needs of these workers directly.⁷⁹ However, as one survey of American retail union officials demonstrated, the unions tended to see the growth of part-time employment as a hindrance to union growth rather than an opportunity.⁸⁰

The unions were justifiably wary of department store managements' attempts to deter unionisation through employment of part-time workers.⁸¹ However, the typical union response, which was to protest against the move toward part-time employment and lobby for the maintenance of full-time employment, only alienated part-time workers further. Even during the 1960s union members who were employed part-time protested that they were often paying the same dues as full-time members for fewer benefits and less influence in their unions.⁸² In the RCIA Local 1401 surveys, it was the part-time workers, and the young ones in particular, who were most vociferously outspoken in their criticisms of the union and most adamant that they felt neglected in union affairs. Interestingly, these respondents were also among those most likely to volunteer constructive routes for change in the union.⁸³ In effect, when the shopworkers' unions failed to address the issues important to part-time and young members

⁷⁸ 'Census of Distribution: The Retail Trades,' *ND* 8 (28 Aug. 1954), 565. U.S. Dept. of Labor, *Employee Earnings in Retail Trade*, 8. Jules Backman, 'Characteristics of Retail Trade Employment,' *JR* 33 (Summer 1957), 79-92, pp. 85-88.

⁷⁹ As was first realised by NUDAW during the Second World War, 'Part-Time Employment of Women: Enrolment in the Union,' *ND* 22 (25 April 1942), 130.

⁸⁰ Michman, 'Survey of Unionization,' 21-22.

⁸¹ Michman, 'Survey of Unionization,' 21-22.

⁸² 'A Part-Time Worker Writes. . .,' *ND* 24 (12 Aug. 1944), 272. 'Letters to the Editor,' *LI-SN* 10 (1 March 1959), 4. Comments made on Surveys 221-99, 326-19, 310-99, 385-01, 400-01, 272-99, 045-99, Union Opinion Questionnaires.

⁸³ Comments made on Surveys 388-03, 430-01, 352-01, 221-99, 183-99, Union Opinion Questionnaires.

directly, they effectively disregarded those with potentially strong *functional loyalties*.

The importance of meeting part-time workers' demands for equal hourly wages, fringe benefits and fair scheduling, and the importance of securing routes for active union participation for these members, only increased as part-time workers came to constitute a larger portion of retail union membership from the 1970s to the present.⁸⁴ Likewise, the importance of addressing equal pay and promotion opportunities for women in the workplace and facilitating women's participation in union activities remained important to all of the major shopworkers' unions with the continued increase in women's employment through the late twentieth century. On the whole, the challenges the RCIA, RWDSU and USDAW faced with regard to women and part-time workers were the same problems faced by the majority of British and American trade unions with female or part-time members. The unions' responses to these challenges were similar to those employed by other trade unions as well.⁸⁵ It was in part this failure to create compellingly new and effective strategies for organising women and part-timers beyond the general solutions offered by the British and American labour movements that limited the retail unions' efforts to draw women and part-time members further into the institutions of union democracy in the early part of the post-war period.

It is likely that race played a similarly inhibitive role with regard to practices of union democracy in the mid-twentieth century. Evidence regarding the relationship between the retail unions and racial minorities employed in the retail trades in Britain and America is extremely limited. However, the fact that photographs in union magazines from the RCIA, RWDSU and USDAW portrayed exclusively 'white' membership with very few exceptions suggests that racial minorities did not constitute a significant portion of retail union membership. This was particularly problematic in America, where by 1969

⁸⁴ Part-time membership in USDAW increased from just over 22 per cent in 1977 to 35 per cent in 2000. 'USDAW Membership Figures,' provided by USDAW Research Department.

⁸⁵ Wrigley, *British Trade Unions*, 23-27. Philip S. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement: From the First Trade Unions to the Present* (London: Collier Macmillan, 1982), esp. 362-416. Sarah Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Unions* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1980).

African Americans constituted over 12 per cent of the department and variety store work force in 12 major urban areas.⁸⁶

If African-American workers were underrepresented in the American unions, this was perhaps a result of the unions' fatalistic approach to racial issues. In 1966 a New York City Commission on Human Rights study concluded that 'Employers reported that unions have had little or no effect in the retail employment picture generally, including the employment of Negroes, with the exception of one union. Unions reported the same thing. Both believe that retail unions can do little to change the employment status of Negroes.'⁸⁷ Active boycotts of stores with discriminatory employment policies, organised by African-Americans themselves, proved most useful in stimulating new retail employment opportunities for racial minorities in the department and variety store trades.⁸⁸ Otherwise, African Americans remained largely open to the vagaries of the retail labour market in the 1950s and '60s, increasing their share of white collar jobs in areas where high wage competition drew 'white' employees out of retail employment, and losing ground in suburban branch stores where they had to compete with middle-class 'white' women in terms of dress, grooming and speech.⁸⁹

The fact that racial issues received little apparent coverage in USDAW's *New Dawn* does not mean that race was not an issue in British retail employment as well at mid-century. A combination of letters in the *John Lewis Partnership Gazette* of 3 July 1954 betrayed the heated and yet often unspoken feelings the issue of racial minorities could raise among employees, management and customers. On announcement that the Partnership had a 'no colour bar' employment policy in 1954, John Spedan Lewis received a postcard from one customer reading:

If you are going to employ negroes in your shops I shall *never never* visit or buy from any of your shops again and I shall tell all my friends to do likewise.

⁸⁶ Charles R. Perry, *The Negro in the Department Store Industry* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Penn. Press, 1971), 57.

⁸⁷ Quoted in Gordon F. Bloom, F. Marion Fletcher, Charles R. Perry, *Negro Employment in Retail Trade: A Study of Racial Policies in the Department Store, Drugstore, and Supermarket Industries* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Penn. Press, 1971), 119-120, see also 25-26.

⁸⁸ Bloom et al., *Negro Employment in Retail Trade*, 127-130. Perry, *Negro in the Department Store*, 31-32. Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*, 47-53.

⁸⁹ Bloom et al., *Negro Employment in Retail Trade*, 121-131.

Have you no regard for the feelings of your women customers in this regard? These loathsome black creatures.⁹⁰

Lewis responded admirably in defence of the Partnership's policy, dismissing this customer's concern as 'neurotic xenophobia'. However, on the very same page the *Gazette* printed a letter from a well-educated Pakistani man who had served in Her Majesty's Forces and sought employment with the Partnership after being refused employment with several other firms and Government Offices on the basis of his ethnicity. To this man Lewis replied that the Partnership had to be careful how many 'coloured' employees were hired, lest too many patrons sharing the persuasions of the customer above decide to shop elsewhere.⁹¹

These sentiments should not be taken as unique to the Partnership and its clientele, but as uniquely accessible to historical investigation, given the Partnership's open journalism. Nevertheless, the passion involved in both letters and their replies makes even more conspicuous the absence of any significant discussion of race in USDAW's publications. The fact that racial employment issues received so little direct attention from the British and American retail unions at mid-century suggests that racial minorities, like women and part-time members, were similarly side-lined in union politics and union democracy, at least until the 1960s. However, further historical investigation is necessary to make more substantial claims regarding the relationship between racial minorities and retail union democracy at mid-century.

White collar?

Although historians and sociologists have often loosely attributed low unionisation in the retail trades to shopworkers' presumed 'white collar' mentality, on the whole, this is a difficult argument to substantiate. To begin with, as George Sayers Bain and Robert Price have argued, 'white collar' is not a very useful term for describing a very diverse sector of the labour market. The case of retail workers exemplifies the main points of their argument. The 'intellectual-manual dichotomy' often used to explain the difference between white and blue collar workers does not fit easily the retail situation where stores employed some workers to do clerical work and others to do exclusively manual

⁹⁰ Italics in original. 'No Colour Bar,' *GJLP* 36 (3 July 1954), 435.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 435-436.

labour (as in the housekeeping and parcel wrapping departments), while most had some combination of intellectual and manual labour (as with salespeople responsible for both selling and stock work). Furthermore, as self-service and rationalisation took hold in department and variety stores, even selling work became more mechanised to the point that check-out counters differed little from a factory production line. This rendered problematic the inclusion of shop floor workers in the 'white collar' category.⁹² Neither is the distinction between 'material-oriented' and 'people-oriented' labour very useful in stores where nearly all jobs from sales to delivery work involved some element of both.⁹³

There is reason, however, for not entirely dismissing the concept of 'white collar' work as one explanation for comparative successes and failures with unionisation in the retail labour market. In fact, shopworkers' unions' members sometimes referred to themselves as white collar workers.⁹⁴ The American unions identified themselves with the national and international plight of white collar workers, especially the RCIA, which was deeply involved in international white-collar union coalition building.⁹⁵ And the unions themselves identified white collar ambitions and mentalities among workers as an impediment to unionisation.⁹⁶

More useful than attributing failures in retail unionisation to white collar identification among shopworkers generally is a specific analysis of some of the key factors assumed to constitute white collar mentality. In their study of British white collar workers in the late 1960s, D. E. Mercer and D. T. H. Weir concluded that 'the white-collar workers' involvement in trade unionism—and his reasons for non-involvement—seem to be based on instrumental as much as ideological

⁹² Marten Estey made this case for grocery clerks, but it became equally true for variety and discount store check-out clerks. Estey, 'The Retail Clerks,' 65-66. The industrialisation of retail work was also a basic premise of Michael Harrington's study of the RCIA's post-war expansion. Harrington, *Retail Clerks*.

⁹³ George Sayers Bain and Robert Price, 'Who is a White-Collar Employee?' *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 10 (Nov. 1972), 325-338. A good introduction to the main texts on 'white collar' workers and unions is Richard Hyman and Robert Price (Eds.), *The New Working Class? White-Collar Workers and Their Organizations: A Reader* (London: Macmillan Press, 1983). The classic study of American white collar workers is C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951).

⁹⁴ Daniel Opler, 'Monkey Business', 149-164, esp. 150-152.

⁹⁵ 'White Collar Workers Behind the Eight-Ball,' *RWDSE* 8 (April 1945), 16, 25. 'The White-Collar Worker and His Problems,' *RCA* 60 (Jan. 1957), 9, 24. 'World White Collar Unionists Meet in Washington,' *RCA* 70 (Dec. 1967), 14-17. 'RCIA Delegates Attend World Congress of White Collar Workers,' *RCA* 61 (Oct. 1958), 6-7.

considerations.⁹⁷ As demonstrated in Chapter Five, the retail unions both responded to and helped perpetuate instrumentalist attitudes toward trade unionism among British and American shopworkers in the post-war years. In America the evidence available suggests that RCIA members *were* consistently instrumentalist in their approach to trade unionism. In 1945, the winner of the national union's essay contest on 'How I have benefited from my membership in the union', began, 'The security and protection of my job is my first consideration. My problem is to remain employed, enjoy good working conditions and maintain my manner of living.'⁹⁸ Twenty-five years later, RCIA Local 1401's survey of its members revealed that only six per cent of its members highly valued grievance procedures and arbitration provisions in their contracts, compared with the 19 per cent who valued the insurance plan most, and 45 per cent who ranked wages provisions highest. Articulating an instrumentalist absence of enthusiasm for their local union, one respondent replied, 'There wasn't anything added [in the contract] that wasn't already given by the company.'⁹⁹ In Britain, USDAW's persistent difficulty in organising high street department stores may have reflected the union's inability to secure wages, hours and benefits that rivalled those already provided by department store employers.¹⁰⁰ However, as Goldthorpe's *Affluent Worker* studies of industrial workers demonstrated, workers' instrumental approach to union membership was not specifically the preserve of white collar workers.¹⁰¹

If it was not instrumentalism alone that defined white collar workers then, perhaps it was instrumentalism in combination with other characteristics including an alleged preference for individualism over collectivism. Another quality commonly attributed to white collar workers by historians and sociologists is the tendency to avoid unionism because of a belief that promotion and advancement may be possible on individual terms without union protection. Tied up with these

⁹⁶ Martin C. Kyne, 'Think It Over,' *RWDSE* 10 (Oct. 1947), 8, 15. Hoffman, 'The Five-Year Million,' 277.

⁹⁷ D. E. Mercer and D. T. H. Weir, 'Attitudes to Work and Trade Unionism Among White-Collar Workers,' *Industrial Relations Journal* 3 (Summer 1972), 49-61.

⁹⁸ 'International's Letter Writing Contest Won,' *RCIA* 49 (Nov.-Dec. 1945), 31.

⁹⁹ Quote from Survey 498-08. For valued benefits, see question 15, Union Opinion Questionnaires.

¹⁰⁰ See pages 307-309 below.

¹⁰¹ John Goldthorpe et al., *The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968). Mercer and Weir consistently acknowledged this themselves, 'Attitudes to Work.'

beliefs are concerns about prestige, meaning in work and independence. In the mid-1950s George Strauss highlighted precisely these factors when he argued that, 'White-collar workers join unions, not because they reject their middle-class aspirations, but because they see unionism as a *better way* of obtaining them.' Strauss concluded that the point of white collar unionism for most members was to protect avenues for individual advancement and distinction both within and outside the workplace.¹⁰² The employee attitude studies in both Britain and America in the post-war years consistently demonstrated that department and variety store workers were concerned with promotion opportunities, prestige, and deriving meaning from their work.¹⁰³ It is perhaps not a coincidence then, that the unions found their greatest successes in organising discount and grocery stores and non-selling departments where rationalisation was strongest, promotion was most unlikely and job categories were the most standardised—in short, where employees' expectations of their work were least fulfilled.¹⁰⁴ In department stores where workers specialised in selling specific merchandise, and where promotion was more likely as a result of high labour turnover and many levels of job categorisation, the unions were notably less successful.¹⁰⁵ However, this difference between discount or variety store organising and department store organisation may also be attributed to the fact that employees of the former establishments received significantly lower wages than those in the latter, perhaps making union membership more appealing from an instrumentalist perspective. In 1961 American variety store workers earned only 69 per cent of the hourly wage received by their department store counterparts.¹⁰⁶

A third factor that might be considered a symptom of white collar psychology is a close identification with people in authority, evidenced by strong employee loyalties and a desire to avoid open conflict with employers. The evidence available from both the conservative RCIA and the radical Macy's Local 1-S suggests that for at least some retail union members, this was the case. In 1946 an employee of Marshall Field's department store in Chicago wrote to the

¹⁰² George Strauss, 'White-Collar Unions Are Different,' *Harvard Business Review* 32 (Sept.-Oct. 1954), 73-81. See also Mercer and Weir, 'Attitudes to Work,' 51-56.

¹⁰³ See discussion in Chapter 3.

¹⁰⁴ Estey, 'The Retail Clerks,' 65-69, 77-78. Harrington, *Retail Clerks*, 2.

¹⁰⁵ Estey, 'The Retail Clerks,' 75-77.

¹⁰⁶ U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employee Earnings in Retail Trade, June 1961*, Bulletin 1338-8 (Washington, D.C., 1962).

RCIA to articulate the union's appeal to his colleagues in the store. He argued that:

The deep sense of responsibility and complete lack of radicalism so apparent in the personnel of [RCIA] Local 1515, is ample evidence of their ability to solve many of the complex problems that are certain to arise between the employees and management of such a vast establishment as the Marshall Field store in Chicago, by intelligent discussion, tolerance and compromise which is the true American way of settling differences.¹⁰⁷

This member's aversion to open conflict with employers was shared by members of the more radical and openly confrontational Macy's Local 1-S. In the mid-1960s, several correspondents to the local union paper took issue with Local 1-S's 'anti-management' style and recommended a more co-operative approach to solving members' problems.¹⁰⁸

Even evidence of strong employee loyalties does not in itself demonstrate a white collar mentality, averse to union organisation. Indeed, in order for the unions to solicit and maintain the long-term *fundamental* and *functional loyalties* of members in a largely unskilled, highly mobile retail labour market, they first had to find employees who were *fundamentally loyal* to their employers. Furthermore, the evidence suggesting that a close identification with employers may have inhibited or circumscribed union loyalties must be tempered with recognition that in the RWDSU's early years, their department store members were often militant and openly confrontational in a style more common to labour relations in industry.¹⁰⁹ Whether this was a historical aberration or proof that department store workers would be openly confrontational when safety in numbers allowed protection from employer intimidation remains open to interpretation. It does, however, lend credence to the assertion that although department and variety store workers may have demonstrated certain elements of 'white collar' mentality, it is very difficult to determine the extent to which that mentality directly inhibited retail unionisation. Of better explanatory power are the unique characteristics of the post-war retail labour market, and issues of gender and job status analysed above.

¹⁰⁷ 'Chicago's Marshall Field Employees' Impression of Local Union 1515!' *RCA* 49 (Oct. 1946), 12.

¹⁰⁸ 'Letters to the Editor,' *LI-SN* 9 (1 March 1963), 3; 10 (June 1964), 7; 10 (May 1964), 5.

¹⁰⁹ Kirstein, *Stores and Unionism*, 63-74.

Craft vs. Industrial, Local vs. National: Strategies of Recruitment and Bargaining

The factors in common to all three of the major shopworkers' unions, such as retail labour market conditions and the predominance of women and part-time workers in retail employment help to explain the common difficulties the unions had recruiting and maintaining *fundamental* and *functional loyalties* over time. However, as the membership statistics offered above demonstrate, there were significant differences between the RWDSU, RCIA and USDAW with regard to total membership growth in retail overall, and in department and variety stores as well. These differences can be explained in part by divergences in union recruitment strategy. Two factors were of particular importance to recruitment success in the dry goods trade: industrial organising techniques focusing on vertical recruitment in a single store rather than across one craft in many stores; and a devotion to the development of department store organising expertise. International differences in local and national bargaining strategies also help to account for differences in American and British success rates with regard to membership and union density.

When the RWDSU split from the RCIA, it abandoned the RCIA's craft-based recruitment and organising techniques. The shift in the RWDSU toward vertical, or industrial, organisation in department and variety stores allowed the union to achieve higher rates of unionisation that had yet been seen under craft-union techniques. In 1937 the RWDSU claimed a membership of 40,000, which doubled by 1940. Until the union became embroiled in political scandal, when anti-Communist leadership initiatives in the late 1940s exposed the inner workings of the union to critical public scrutiny, its department-store-dominant membership outstretched the total international membership of the grocery-dominated RCIA.¹¹⁰ By moving away from job-categorised organisation and favouring store-based organisation from its beginnings in the late 1930s, the RWDSU was able to win the union shop, maintenance of membership clauses and the numerical power it needed to strengthen its bargaining power vis-à-vis individual employers.

¹¹⁰ Baker and France, *Personnel Administration*, 102-104. For an example of RWDSU industrial organisation, see 'Bloomingdale Dept. Store Signs Contract,' *Retail Employee* 1 (12 Dec. 1938), 1.

The RWDSU gained additional strength from the CIO's strong devotion to organising department store workers. In 1937 Sidney Hillman, one of the founders of the CIO, and Samuel Wolchok, future president of the RWDSU, chaired a Department Store Organizing Committee that focused exclusively on unionisation of New York department stores. The Committee's concerted campaign paid off by providing the RWDSU with organisational expertise and the numerical and political membership base it needed to fuel further organisation in the department store field in the post-war years.¹¹¹

Through the long post-war period, the RCIA could not quite rival the grassroots organising expertise of the RWDSU in the dry goods trade. In the late 1930s, the AFL sponsored a Department Store Employees' Council to organise strikes at department stores in major American cities. However, the craft-union heritage of the AFL meant that the Council had to organise eleven major unions, all representing some portion of the department store work force, with predictably limited success.¹¹² The RCIA continually tried, and sometimes succeeded in organising department and variety store workers through the 1940s and '50s with city-level organising campaigns, such as in Chicago and Milwaukee in 1946. At the individual store level, however, the union was often dependent on the AFL-affiliated Teamsters and Building Service Employees to break the ice among non-selling workers first.¹¹³

For a long time the RCIA failed to create the powerful nationwide campaign it needed to facilitate the consolidation of department and variety store organising expertise from which the RWDSU had long benefited. When future International President, James Suffridge, was President of the California State Council of the RCIA in the mid-1940s, he helped to organise California locals to put pressure on the Safeway grocery chain. When Suffridge became President of

¹¹¹ Baker and France, *Personnel Administration*, 102-103, 137-138. This campaign continued in the post-war years, and was reinvigorated after the 1948 crisis at the national union level. 'Gigantic Drive Launched,' *RWDSE* 8 (May 1945), 3, 14. 'RWDSU Plans Drive Among Unorganized,' *RWDSE* 16 (Feb. 1952), 19.

¹¹² Kirstein, *Stores and Unionism*, 71-72. For more on the problems of craft-based unionism in the RCIA and the New Zealand retail unions, see Evan Roberts, 'Gender in Store: Salespeople's Working Hours and Union Organisation in New Zealand and the United States, 1930-60,' *Labour History* 83 (Nov. 2002), 107-130.

¹¹³ 'International's Chicago Department Store Campaign Is Meeting With Real Success!' *RCIA* 49 (March-April 1946), 14-15. 'Milwaukee's 5,000 Department Store Employees Welcome Organization and Real Security!' *RCIA* 49 (July-Aug. 1946), 7-8. Baker & France, *Personnel Administration*, 100-102. Estey, 'The Strategic Alliance,' 41-53.

the International, he tried to expand on this chain store organising concept through formation of a National Chain Store Committee that could co-ordinate picketing and boycotts on a national basis to challenge nation-wide chain stores. The Committee secured some successes in individual campaigns, including a successful boycott of Montgomery Wards in 1954.¹¹⁴ However, the seven-year-long boycott of Sears Roebuck stores in the 1960s resulted in no significant change in the company's anti-union labour policies.¹¹⁵ It was not until 1969 that the RCIA founded a Department Store Committee explicitly for the purpose of improving organisational technique in the dry goods sector.¹¹⁶ In the meantime, the union often increased its department store membership simply by capturing individual members and entire locals disenchanted with RWDSU political scandal.¹¹⁷

In the American context, inter-union competition greatly affected organisational strategies and the overall union density rates in various retail trades. Given the large numbers of unorganised workers in retail, many industrial unions continually tried to expand their jurisdiction over various parts of the retail trade, inevitably intruding on the jurisdiction of the two major retail unions, the RCIA and RWDSU. There was not just rivalry between the AFL and CIO unions, but conflict among AFL unions and among CIO unions as well. In the AFL, the RCIA, the Teamsters, the Building Service Employees International Union (BSEIU), the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butchers Workmen all had significant memberships in retail stores, and a dozen other AFL craft unions claimed minor membership over craft workers in non-selling positions. In the CIO, the RWDSU held jurisdiction over most retail workers, but from 1948 to 1954 the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) and the independent Distributive, Processing and Office Workers of America (DPOWA) also claimed jurisdiction in the retail trades, and department stores in particular. Competing unions in the retail trades tended not just to pursue the same potential

¹¹⁴ Harrington, *Retail Clerks*, 37-40.

¹¹⁵ 'Sears Roebuck Consumer Boycott Dropped by RCIA,' *RCA* 70 (June 1967), 3.

¹¹⁶ 'RCIA Department Store Committee Is Named,' *RCA* 72 (March 1969), 3. 'Department Store Specialists Meet at Headquarters,' *RCA* 72 (May 1969), 14-15. 'RCIA Department Store Committee Looks at 1969 Organizing Gains,' *RCA* 73 (Jan. 1970), 9. 'RCIA Conducts Workshop for Department Store Specialists,' *RCA* 73 (Feb. 1970), 5.

¹¹⁷ '1,900 Wanamaker Store Employees Affiliate With International in Unity Move,' *RCA* 52 (March 1949), 11-12.

membership, but attempted (and frequently succeeded with) raids on other unions' members.¹¹⁸

The most fierce union rivalry was between the RCIA and the Teamsters, made only more hostile by the former union's dependence on the latter to put pressure on picketed stores by refusing to cross picket lines to deliver merchandise. When the RCIA successfully formed 'strategic alliances' with the Teamsters to organise individual stores jointly, they were significantly more likely to succeed in their organisational efforts. This was particularly true in department and variety stores where clerks alone did not have the economic strength to challenge employers. However, these alliances were fragile ones, too frequently broken as a result of raiding attempts or inter-union politics, to the detriment of department store organisation in particular.¹¹⁹ A case in point was the RCIA's attempt to organise workers at the notoriously anti-union Sears stores in Boston from 1950-55. In 1953 the Sears Roebuck Employees' Council, set up in 1938 to counter union organising drives in the Boston stores, turned on its historical roots and voted overwhelmingly to affiliate with the RCIA. Thereafter, Sears' anti-union labour relations consultant, Nathan Shefferman, began to crack down on the RCIA's organising drive through a range of both legal and illegal tactics. At the same time, the Teamsters began their own diversionary organising drive to rival the RCIA's. The end result was a no union vote in 1955 that rendered futile the RCIA's five-year organising drive in the Boston stores and cooled RCIA-Teamster relations even further.¹²⁰

In sum, differences in long-term organisational strategy and inter-union competition in America help to account for the significant differences in membership success among the major American retail unions and across the various sectors of the retail trades in the post-war years. However, the dramatic difference between the RWDSU's and RCIA's membership growth in America and USDAW's stagnation in the post-war years in Britain is more difficult to explain, given national differences in retail labour markets, rates of rationalisation,

¹¹⁸ Zundel, 'Conflict and Co-operation,' 301-311. For example, the URWDSEA's attempt to take over RCIA membership at the Toledo Lamson Bros. Department Store in 1944. 'URWDSEA Rakes RCIPA Over Coals in Tilt at Lamson's,' *RWDS Employee* 7 (1 Dec. 1944), 12.

¹¹⁹ Estey, 'The Strategic Alliance,' 41-53.

¹²⁰ Harrington, *Retail Clerks*, 75-76. The close personal relationship between Shefferman and Teamsters leader Dave Beck made the simultaneous Teamsters and Sears drive against the RCIA

labour law and organisational history. Here again, though, differences in organisational strategy can offer some preliminary answers.

To begin with, USDAW had already secured much of its membership base before the Second World War. This was largely a result of the gradual voluntary implementation of union shop conditions by nearly all Co-operative retail societies in the 1930s. These conditions privileged NUDAW, the union catering to most Co-operative retail employees. Without this advantage, NAUSA&C, which concentrated in the private trades, constantly struggled to sustain and develop its membership. As a result, NUDAW's membership contribution to the newly amalgamated USDAW in 1947 was twice that of NAUSA&C.¹²¹ Consequently, the Co-operative focus of NUDAW continued into the newly amalgamated union. Until the mid-1960s retail Co-operative membership accounted for over 60 per cent of USDAW's total membership.¹²² With only 123 Area Organisers at mid-century to cover the entire British distributive and allied trades, USDAW not surprisingly focused on maintaining this Co-operative stronghold. However, it became clear in the late 1950s and early 1960s that Co-operative employment was on the decline, and that the union would have to make a co-ordinated drive in the private trades in order to avoid sinking with the Co-operative shop ship. (See Figure 6.10.) Hence, in the early 1960s USDAW fully reinvigorated its private trade drive with campaigns at Woolworth's, the House of Fraser, and grocery chains nationwide.¹²³ By the late 1970s the concerted private trade drive had paid off with over 37 per cent membership growth between 1966 and 1978, after two decades of membership stagnation.¹²⁴ (See Table 6.1 above.)

But USDAW's dramatic membership growth in the 1970s cannot be attributed to private trade drives alone. The lack of co-ordinated organisational effort in the private trades for USDAW in the early post-war years was part of a much larger problem. From the 1940s until the early '70s USDAW suffered for lack of a strong organising division devoted to new member recruitment.

even more problematic. Sanford Jacoby, *Modern Manors: Welfare Capitalism Since the New Deal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 132-137.

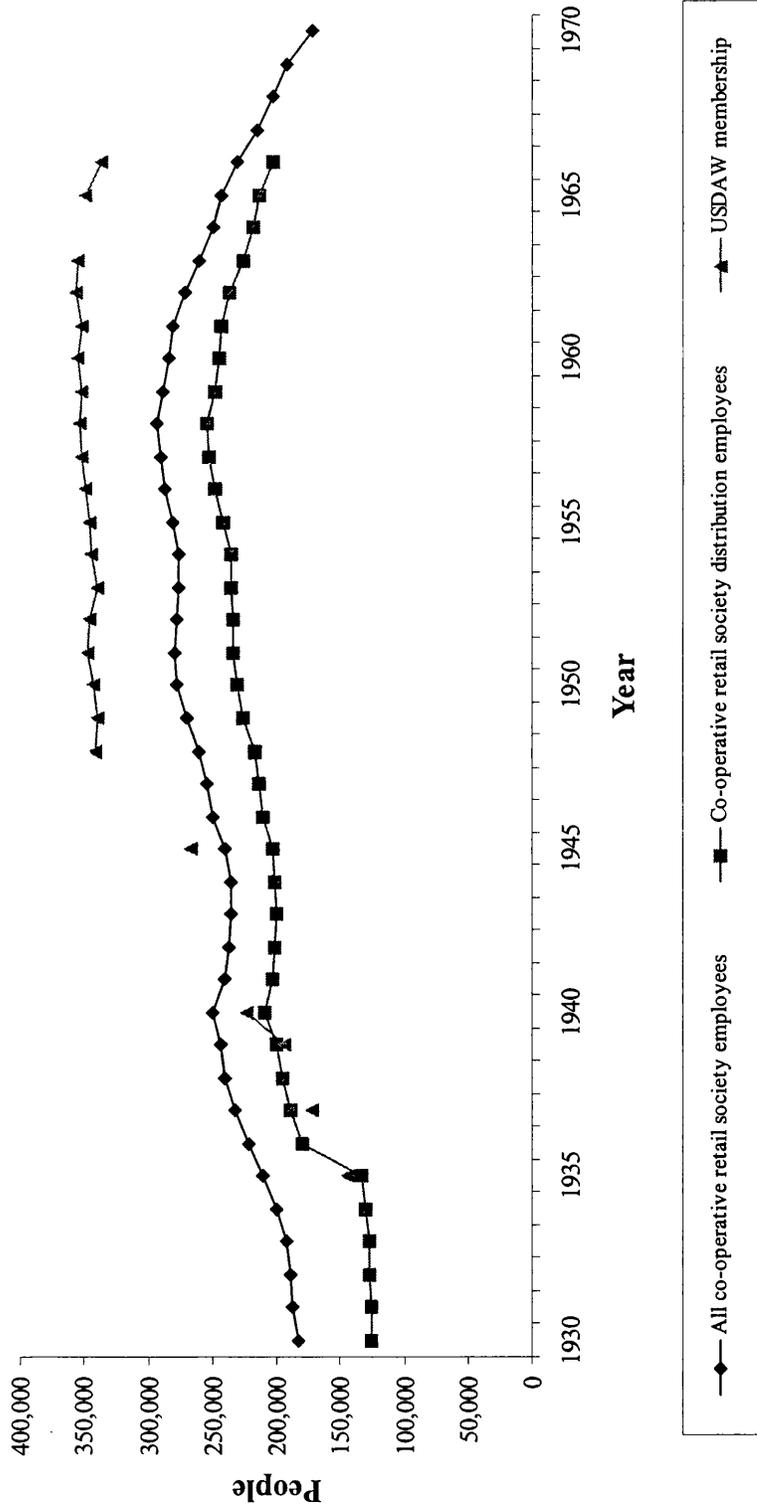
¹²¹ Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 171.

¹²² 'Usdaw Membership Figures,' 1965-1988, provided by USDAW Research Department.

¹²³ Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 259-260, 275-276.

¹²⁴ 'USDAW Membership Statistics,' provided by USDAW Research Department. This growth was probably also a factor of increased trade union militancy and overall union growth in Britain in the 1970s, and the union's membership decline after 1980 directly reflected broader trends in Britain. Wrigley, *British Trade Unions*, 18-32.

Figure 6.10. British Co-operative Retail Society Employment and
USDAW Membership, 1939-1970



Source: *Co-operative Statistics* (Manchester: Co-operative Union, yearly). USDAW membership sources from Table 6.1.

Through the late 1960s the national union followed the traditional voluntary Collector-Canvasser model, where loyal rank-and-file members collected dues and tried to recruit new members in return for a small commission. A special investigative committee report arranged through the Executive Council in 1963 found that even full-time salaried Area Organisers were unable to devote much time to recruitment because they spent so much time servicing members and collecting dues. It was not until the early '70s, after a good deal of debate, that the national union began employing full-time recruitment organisers on a wider basis.¹²⁵ The significance of this move was directly reflected in the membership growth described above. The lesson to be learned from USDAW's experience is that even though members' *functional loyalties* could be relied upon to help unions recruit new members in the post-war years, the more successful approach for the national union was to engage in top-down strategic organising. Further support for this conclusion can be taken from the fact that the RCIA, which laid the foundations for a national organising structure and hired more salaried organisers in the mid-1940s, was the most successful in recruiting new members during the post-war years.¹²⁶

Another difficulty for USDAW was its bargaining strategy. From the Second World War the union focused on securing an ever-improved minimum wage for retail workers through Wages Councils. These Councils had initially been encouraged by the government during the Second World War to raise the wages of those workers least protected by unionism, particularly those employed in small stores. As USDAW and other unions negotiating for the retail trades soon discovered, the Wages Councils worked to the disadvantage of the unions with regard to department stores and chain store multiples. Executives representing these stores on Wages Councils, including Sir Hugh Fraser, commonly argued that minimum wage rates could not be pushed higher without endangering the economic security of the small trader. In effect, new rates were based on the smallest retailer's ability to pay.¹²⁷

The challenge USDAW faced with recruitment was to convince potential members that joining the union would actually pay off. Negotiations through the

¹²⁵ Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 256-257, 260-263.

¹²⁶ Harrington, *Retail Clerks*, 29-31.

Wages Councils directly undermined that effort. Originally USDAW's leaders welcomed the Wages Councils, optimistically believing that non-members would attribute their higher wages to the union—rather than the government—and join up.¹²⁸ There is no evidence, however, to suggest that USDAW were ever successful in their attempts to convince non-members that the unions were responsible for statutory wage minima. Given that the wages in retail were consistently low compared with other trades, the desire to convince potential members that the union was responsible for their wages was questionable in any case. The alternative was to attract new members to the union by securing wages higher than the minima through union contract. But the Wages Councils again undermined that effort. When USDAW attempted to negotiate higher rates with individual stores, as with the House of Fraser in 1965, those stores' executives often refused to negotiate except through Wages Councils.¹²⁹

To make things worse, union-negotiated rates in the economically declining Co-operative retail societies were frequently lower than in the large department stores at mid-century. In October 1966, male sales assistants in Co-operative drapery shops¹³⁰ earned £12 19s 1d weekly, compared with £15 13s 5d in drapery multiple shops with voluntary agreements and £16 4s 9d in other drapery multiples that were, presumably, unorganised. Co-operative female sales assistants and cashiers also fell well below standard weekly earnings in private trade shops. Paradoxically, and much to the detriment of USDAW, the *least* unionised shopworkers in the drapery trades earned the highest wages.¹³¹ Moreover, in the early 1960s the Union was still struggling for a £10 weekly minimum for adult males in the Co-operative movement when the average

¹²⁷ Robert E. L. Knight, 'Unionism Among Retail Clerks in Postwar Britain,' *Industrial & Labor Relations Review* 14 (July 1961), 515-527.

¹²⁸ J. D. Hiscock, 'The Retail Wages Orders—At Last,' *ND* 3 (1 Oct. 1949), 615-616. Editorial, 'The Common Interest,' *ND* 23 (4 Dec. 1943), 385.

¹²⁹ 'Frustration,' *ND* 19 (27 March 1965), 224. Knight, 'Unionism Among Retail Clerks,' 517-518. For further criticism of the Wages Councils by members, see 'Post-War Wage Negotiating Machinery,' *ND* 25 (24 Feb. 1945), 63-64, 'Building Membership and Bargaining From Strength,' *ND* 16 (7 July 1962), 448.

¹³⁰ Drapery shops include all stores covered by the Drapery Wages Council, including department and variety stores.

¹³¹ T. W. Cynog-Jones, 'Earnings in Retail Drapery,' *ND* 21 (April 1967), 121-124. On the history of problems with wages and working conditions in Co-operatives, see GDH Cole, *A Century of Co-operation* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1944), 335-36. Sidney & Beatrice Webb, *The Consumers' Co-operative Movement* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1921), 188-89.

industrial weekly wage in Britain was already £15.¹³² In 1966, non-managerial shopworkers in the drapery trades were still earning only 80 per cent of the weekly earnings of manual workers in all industries.¹³³ The union had clearly not succeeded by the mid-1960s in its effort to make retail union membership appealing to instrumentalist shopworkers looking for higher wages.

The situation with regard to weekly working hours was much the same. In 1961 USDAW secured its first individual store agreement with the Lewis's group of department stores. This agreement provided for a five-day work week in a six-day trading week. However, this major union success was pre-empted by department store executives, including Trevor Bowen of the John Barker store, and John Spedan Lewis of the John Lewis Partnership, who voluntarily offered their employees the first five-day, 40-hour week working conditions in British department stores in 1955 and 1960 respectively. USDAW would not secure similar provisions through the national agreement with Co-operative retail societies until 1963.¹³⁴ Consequently, the union's claim to provide better wages and hours than private employers was constantly undermined by those private employers who in fact provided more than the union could in its Co-operative contracts.

Given USDAW's experience, it would seem that the lack of regulatory wages and hours structures in America until the early 1960s worked paradoxically to the advantage of the retail unions. Measures of increased union membership and union density were recorded in those cities, like New York, where the retail unions set the standard for higher wages and shorter work weeks up to twenty years earlier than comparable benefits provided by USDAW.¹³⁵ It is difficult to say whether the non-union member was better served in the US where strong retail union contracts drove up wages for all workers in a single region, or in Britain, where both urban and rural shopworkers were protected by national wage regulations. It is clear, however, that when American shopworkers were eventually included under Fair Labor Standards Act provisions in 1963, many

¹³² Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 272-274.

¹³³ Cynog-Jones, 'Earnings in Retail Drapery,' 124.

¹³⁴ Executive Council Statement, 'Five-day Working Week in Shops,' *ND* 9:18 (27 Aug. 1955), 529, 534. Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 242-244. In New Zealand, where the shopworkers' unions also negotiated national wages and focused on limiting working hours by limiting trading hours as USDAW did, the unions had similarly limited success: Roberts, 'Gender in Store'.

workers benefited. By 1966 only one per cent of department store employees earned less than the \$1.25 minimum wage, down from 35 per cent five years earlier. In variety stores the change was even more dramatic, from 78 per cent earning less than the minimum wage in 1961 to 4 per cent in 1966.¹³⁶ Overall then, there was always the potential that national regulation could restrain the gains of those workers who were unionised by setting wage minima that became wage maxima. However, the American case demonstrates that the retail unions could and did influence working conditions for the majority of unorganised shopworkers through political bargaining at the local, state and national levels.

Thus far, examination of retail labour market conditions has provided some explanations for the common difficulties the British and American shopworkers' unions faced with regard to maintaining loyalties among retail workers. The present comparative analysis of union recruitment and bargaining strategies has aimed to explain why the major unions met with differential success in improving overall membership rates in department and variety stores in particular. However, there were other problems striking at the heart of retail unionism that even more directly determined successes and failures in maintaining both *fundamental* and *functional loyalties* in the post-war years. As suggested above in the analysis of women's and part-time workers' limited involvement in union affairs, the state of union democracy greatly affected *functional loyalties* to union for the least privileged members of the retail labour force in both Britain and America. On a larger scale, it was arguably the inner state of union democracy that determined the most dramatic changes in union membership in the post-war years and set the most persistent challenges to the maintenance of *functional* and *ideological loyalties* among union members.

'The Member is the Union' Revisited: The Challenges of Union Democracy

From the beginnings of the British and American labour movements, trade unions staked their local and national bargaining power on their claims to be democratically representative institutions. The shopworkers' unions in both countries were no exception, and they relied heavily on loyal members to make

¹³⁵ Baker and France, *Personnel Administration*, 114-119.

¹³⁶ 'Retail Trade: A Study to Measure the Effects of the Minimum Wage and Maximum Hours Standards of the Fair Labor Standards Act,' US Department of Labor, Jan. 1967, 28.

union democracy viable, as was discussed in Chapter 4. However, just as union democracy depended on member loyalty, so members' loyalties depended on the proper functioning of their unions' democratic and representative systems. The breakdown of such systems generally precipitated the failure of either *fundamental* or *functional* loyalties at individual and collective levels.

For all three of the major shopworkers' unions, the challenges of union democracy that could lead to failures in *fundamental* and *functional loyalties* were exacerbated by the consolidation of decision-making power in the national unions from the inter-war years until the 1960s. In this period the British and American shopworkers' unions moved further away from their historical roots as grassroots workers' organisations and became economic and political institutions in their own right. As retail union membership expanded from the 1920s in Britain and the 1930s in America, as local and national unions amalgamated, and as bargaining decisions were increasingly made at the regional and national level, decision-making power was increasingly invested in elected union representatives and national union congresses rather than in the local democracy of the workplace branch.

In both America and Britain the concentration of power that proceeded at mid-century was clearest in the move toward regional and national, rather than workplace, contracts. In Britain the move toward top-down bargaining was evidenced by USDAW's shift toward national-level bargaining with the Co-operative movement from the mid-1940s and retail employers' associations, such as the Multiple Tailors' Association and the Multiple Shoe Retailers' Association, from the late-1950s. Such agreements allowed USDAW to be recognised as the bargaining agent for employees working in establishments covered by the negotiations, whether those employees were union members or not.¹³⁷ In the US, the RCIA also moved toward national agreements with national chain variety stores such as Montgomery Wards, and city-wide agreements with department store employers' associations. The advantage of such agreements was a standardised contract and less investment of time and money in individual store

¹³⁷ On NUDAW/USDAW's national agreement with the Co-operatives, see Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 177-184. On negotiations with employers' associations, see Knight, 'Unionism Among Retail Clerks,' 518-521.

negotiating procedures.¹³⁸ However, just as retail employers became ever more detached from their employees with the expansion of department and variety store chains, so retail union leaders were arguably becoming increasingly detached from their members with the bureaucratisation of national union activity and the professionalisation of union representation that accompanied it. This trend toward 'business unionism', as Patrick Renshaw has aptly labelled it, was not unique to the retail unions, but part of a broader process of bureaucratisation in the American labour movement particularly.¹³⁹

The expansion of national unions held both great promises and grave risks, then. On the one hand, the move toward national bargaining promised more efficient use of union resources and more independence from high labour turnover and the unpredictability of individual loyalties. National organisation and consolidation of local activity were also the basis on which the unions built strategic campaigns for organising nation-wide chain stores and political campaigns for legislative regulation of shop wages, hours and working conditions. On the other hand, one risk of union growth was that the shift toward national-level collective bargaining would so far remove rank-and-file members from important decisions that many avenues for expression of voice would be effectively rendered futile. Another risk was that the sentiment of political unity that had previously been cultivated at the local level for the sake of resisting employer's divide-and-conquer methods would be artificially created at the national level by punishing dissenters.

The RCIA and Concentration of Power

In America, the initial desertion from the RCIA of the dissident locals that would form the RWDSU signalled a major crisis in the union's democratic systems. From the mid-1920s C. C. Coulter held the highest position in the RCIA. In 1937 several New York locals questioned whether the national union under Coulter's direction was pursuing craft union recruitment styles to the detriment of union membership. In response, Coulter and his fellow officers passed a new executive

¹³⁸ The first such agreements were in 1937 with Pittsburgh's Labor Standards Association representing the city's seven department stores, and the San Francisco Retailers Council representing department stores in that city. Baker and France, *Personnel Administration*, 108-109, 132, 134-135. These continued through the post-war years. 'San Francisco: \$1,250,000 Added Income,' *RCA* 56 (Sept. 1953), 15. 'Ward's Comes to Terms,' *RCA* 59 (Nov. 1956), 3.

resolution that made suspension of locals possible if they were found to be insubordinate to the authority of the national union. At that time, the national union had not held a convention for thirteen years, so the New York locals called for a new convention and put forward their own candidates to challenge the RCIA's officials. Coulter not only refused to schedule a new convention, but disqualified all the rival candidates with his constitutionally-concentrated executive powers. It was this blatant disregard for the underlying principles of union democracy that led to the formation of the RCIA's main rival union, the RWDSU, from its own membership base.¹⁴⁰ (See Figure 6.11.)

In 1962 independent researcher Michael Harrington argued that the concentration of the RCIA's executive powers that had begun under Coulter only continued in the 1940s and '50s under James Suffridge's leadership. On the one hand, Harrington attributed the dramatic growth of the union in the post-war years to the fact that Suffridge used his powers to initiate dramatic policy changes, including the rationalisation and co-ordination of union organising efforts at a national level. Harrington fairly presented Suffridge as a benevolent executive who used his powers for the betterment of the membership. At the same time, he prophetically warned that the continued concentration of power in the hands of a few boded ill for potential abuse under different leadership. Harrington argued that:

the RCIA is a disturbing symptom of the development of efficient welfarism within our society, without the participation of the people who belong to the institution. This is a challenge to the traditional American ideal of the labor movement as an organization of substantive democracy as well as of economic benefits.¹⁴¹

When Suffridge announced that he would not seek re-election as leader of the RCIA in 1967, the *International* faced its first contested election since Suffridge's rise to power in 1947, and Harrington's predictions were put to the test.

The evidence available presents a murky picture of the events surrounding the 1968 RCIA election. This is in large part a result of the fact that the *Advocate* was officially edited by the RCIA President (at that time Suffridge) and did not report factional opposition, a problem Harrington had highlighted six years

¹³⁹ Renshaw, *American Labor and Consensus Capitalism*.

¹⁴⁰ Harrington, *Retail Clerks*, 8.

¹⁴¹ Harrington, *Retail Clerks*, 9-10, 13-31, quote from p. 88.

Figure 6.11. The consequences of failures in union democracy

Spring Cleaning!



Retail Employee 2 (27 March 1939), 8.

earlier.¹⁴² It appears that a group of RCIA members, including Organizing Directors John Haletsky and Charles Kelleher, put forward a representative slate to rival that headed by Suffridge-backed Jim Housewright. When Housewright and his colleagues won the election, Haletsky, Kelleher and others formed the Committee for a Democratic Election to contest the result of the election, first to the Secretary of Labor, and later to the Federal District Court for the District of Columbia. Although both institutions upheld the election results, the Federal District Court's decision, printed in the *Advocate* on order of the court, charged Housewright with unlawfully dismissing Haletsky and Kelleher from their positions as Organizing Directors for their role in contesting the election. The court also accused Housewright of writing a letter to various locals encouraging similar intimidation of other members of the Committee for a Democratic Election.¹⁴³ The court's decision showed—just as Harrington had warned—that the concentration of power had led to abuse of power and intimidation of political rivals.

Shortly after the federal court had resolved the 1968 election, RCIA Local 1401 in Madison, Wisconsin conducted the survey of its members referred to in previous chapters. Of the 96 department and discount store members who responded to the questionnaire, 17 answered that the unfavourable publicity about the *national* union made them 'feel suspicious about [their] local union or local union leaders'. Twenty-seven others remained ambivalent about the impact the publicity had on their impressions of their local union.¹⁴⁴ Even though those who openly claimed to be suspicious of their union were in the minority, this suspicion may have stemmed in part from similar problems with union democracy at the local level, as evidenced by other respondents' comments.

When those who did not regularly attend Local 1401 union meetings were asked why they did not, many responded that they worked on the evenings meetings were held, that they were too busy, or could not find transportation. However, nearly one out of five also responded that meetings were not meaningful to them. Given the chance to elaborate, members made comments such as, '[I] don't think they know I exist' and 'they wouldn't listen to anything I

¹⁴² Harrington, *Retail Clerks*, 16-17.

¹⁴³ The court order appeared without comment in *RCA 72* (July 1969), 19. 'Federal Court Affirms Results of RCIA Election,' *RCA 72* (Sept. 1969), 20.

had to say', suggesting that avenues for the expression of voice so crucial to the formation of *functional loyalties* had perhaps not been fully developed. More problematic for the union was the comment by one member that, 'the conducting of business by the union in this way is essentially a rubber-stamp affair'.¹⁴⁵ This comment confirmed Harrington's assertion that the systematic concentration of power in RCIA locals meant that members might lapse into apathy as a result of feeling left out of decision-making processes.¹⁴⁶ However, the fact that Local 1401 conducted a thorough survey of its members in 1969 suggests that it wanted to begin changing this dynamic and to open up spaces for the expression of member voice.

The RWDSU and Anti-Communism

Of the three major British and American shopworkers' unions, the RWDSU proved most explicitly vulnerable to the challenges of maintaining union democracy under conditions of union expansion. From the union's beginnings in the late 1930s, the leadership of the RWDSU recognised the potentially divisive and ruinous affects of anti-Communism on union affairs if the Communist brand was recklessly wielded.¹⁴⁷ Despite this preparedness, during the Second World War anti-Communism struck at the heart of the union, opening a political chasm that would lead to the near ruin of the union in the late 1940s.

In 1945 Arthur Osman, President of RWDSU New York Local 65, publicly criticised RWDSU President Samuel Wolchok for allowing the union's Chicago locals to break the war-time no-strike agreement at the Montgomery Ward's properties in the union's ongoing battle against Ward's President Sewell Avery. Osman and Wolchok consequently engaged in a downward spiral of personal accusation, Osman accusing Wolchok of Trotskyism and treason, the latter painting Osman as a devoted Communist engaging in 'criminal sabotage of the workers'.¹⁴⁸ This intersection of industrial relations and Trotskyist-

¹⁴⁴ See responses to Question 18, Union Opinion Questionnaires.

¹⁴⁵ Surveys 549-01, 488-01, 007-99, Union Opinion Questionnaires.

¹⁴⁶ Harrington, *Retail Clerks*, 43-63.

¹⁴⁷ 'Samuel Wolchok Discusses Union Objectives, Activities,' *Retail Employee* 1 (March 1938), 3, 9.

¹⁴⁸ Since the *RWDSE* did not allow Osman any space to argue his case, his words can only be gleaned from direct quotations carefully chosen by the *Employee's* Editor. Samuel Wolchok, 'Treachery in Our Ranks,' *RWDSE* 8 (Jan. 1945), 4, 5, 8. "'Tehran" Abracadabra: Labor Cast Overboard,' *RWDSE* 8 (Feb. 1945), 5, 14.

Communist conflict was not uncommon in the USA or the UK in the circumstances of the war, when military alliance with the USSR compelled many 'loyal' Communists in unions to adopt vigilant anti-strike positions.¹⁴⁹ The usual outcome was the vilification of strikers—whose actions disrupted the war effort—as Trotskyist 'wreckers', hence Osman's accusations against Wolchok for allowing the Chicago strike. Wolchok's criticism of Osman is telling, because it was an accusation against Osman's moderation and adherence to no-strike agreements. In the post-war years Osman and other accused Communists in the union would be criticised for their radicalism and militancy. In the RWDSU other members and locals joined in the fray, with New York Local 1102, Retail Dry Goods Employees Union passing a resolution stating that Osman and his colleagues should 'pay the ultimate penalty which our International Union can impose'.¹⁵⁰ Although Osman retained leadership of Local 65 and the issue faded from the union records with the end of the war, the national union had set a precedent of politically-involved intimidation and intolerance of dissent that would resurface three years later.

The leadership of the RWDSU consistently protested against the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 as most other American unions did. However, in 1948 the union's President, Samuel Wolchok, followed the CIO's leadership and ordered all local officials to comply with the provision set out in the Act that required union officials to sign non-Communist affidavits. The decision on the part of most RWDSU locals to comply was in large part a response to the events at the New York Oppenheim, Collins department store where RWDSU Local 1250 was not allowed by the company, and in turn the National Labor Relations Board, to renew its contract because the local's leaders had refused to sign the required affidavits. The RCIA, which had passed a resolution on its constitution to bar Communists and fascists from membership, stood ready to organise the membership of RWDSU locals discredited by the NLRB. This is exactly what happened at Oppenheim, Collins.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ John McIlroy, "'The First Great Battle in the March to Socialism': Dockers, Stalinists, and Trotskyists in 1945,' *Revolutionary History* 6 (1996), esp. 121-133.

¹⁵⁰ 'Local 1102 Demands Board Nail Osman,' *RWDSE* 8 (March 1945), 24. 'Calls for Loyalty to American Ideals,' and 'Flays Local 65 Head for Union Treachery,' *RWDSE* 8 (Feb. 1945), 17, 26.

¹⁵¹ 'The Issue Is—Communism,' *RCA* 51 (Sept. 1948), 3-4. Harrington, *Retail Clerks*, 62-63. The bar on membership remained in place through the post-war years: 'Retail Clerks International Constitution,' *RCA* 70 (Sept. 1967), 38-72, 41.

Confident in their ability to withstand RCIA raiding, the leaders of several New York City department store locals took issue with Wolchok's demand that they sign the affidavits. They did so in part to defend the principle of freedom of political association, and in part to protest against the lack of participatory democratic debate symbolised by Wolchok's attempts to order local officials to comply. But these leaders were not themselves without blame. The problems with democracy present in the national union were mirrored in the local unions where strong leaders held editorial control of their unions' newspapers,¹⁵² and some practiced intimidation of oppositional rivals. In Local 3, which covered New York City Bloomingdale's department store, three members attempted to contest local leadership by accusing that leadership of Communist affiliation. When the Local's leaders expelled these three members and encouraged Bloomingdale's executives to dismiss them from employment, the RWDSU national executive stepped in.¹⁵³

The events in Local 3, combined with the refusal of many New York local RWDSU officers to sign the non-Communist affidavits, brought the internal conflicts of the union into the national spotlight. In the summer of 1948 a sub-committee of the Congressional Committee on Labor and Education held hearings regarding Communism in the union. Paradoxically, the national union, represented by Wolchok and Director of Department Store Organization, Jack Altman, and the leadership of the dissenting locals both claimed to be defending democracy, even from their opposing positions. The RWDSU's leaders argued that they were shoring up democracy against the Communist threat by barring Communists—or those believed to be such—from official positions. The dissident leaders claimed to be protecting democratic processes by allowing members to elect as officials whomever they saw fit to elect.¹⁵⁴

When the dissident leadership of the New York department store locals continued to refuse compliance with Wolchok's orders, even under pressure from the Congressional committee, Wolchok suspended those officers and appointed

¹⁵² An issue that would resurface for the Macy's local in the 1950s: 'Criticism,' *LI-SN* 8 (1 March 1957), 4.

¹⁵³ 'Appeals Committee Report,' *RWDSE* 11 (July 1948), 2-3.

¹⁵⁴ 'Wolchok Defeats Attempt To Label RWDSU "Red"', *RWDSE* 11 (Aug. 1948), 3. Sam Kovenetsky, 'Why Local 1-S Left CIO In '48,' *LI-SN* 2 (1 March 1951), 1. These debates continued within the union as regarding a proposed referendum to bar Communists, Nazis and

administrators to oversee the affairs of their locals.¹⁵⁵ In protest against what they considered interference with local democracy on the part of the national union, the suspended leaders led the dissident locals to secede from the RWDSU. They parted accusing Wolchok of tyrannical behaviour, and taking both the numerical and political heart of the union's membership with them.¹⁵⁶ As a result of this mass desertion, CIO President Philip Murray asked Wolchok to resign and assigned organisational jurisdiction over department stores in the CIO to the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA).¹⁵⁷ The events of 1948 and 1949 incurred a membership loss of 93,000 members, or nearly 60 per cent of the RWDSU's membership. The ACWA, a union accustomed to organising textile production and specialty store workers, failed almost entirely in its efforts to organise more department store workers for the CIO.¹⁵⁸

Ironically, when the secessionist New York locals rejoined the RWDSU in 1954 and '55, many of the leaders formerly accused of Communism, including Macy's Local 1-S President, Sam Kovenetsky, and Local 65 President, Arthur Osman, were welcomed back into the RWDSU with open arms.¹⁵⁹ Whether or not Kovenetsky, Osman and other left-wing local leaders were ever affiliated with the Communist Party (and there is little evidence to suggest they were) appeared irrelevant to the national unions' leaders after the high tide of McCarthyism had passed. It seems, then, that anti-Communism in the RWDSU was less a matter of sorting the proven patriots from the supposed traitors as RWDSU executives at the time claimed it to be, and more a means for bringing dissident memberships in

fascists from union office: 'Constitutional Referendum on Communism,' *RWDSE* 12 (Jan. 1949), 2, 15. Martin C. Kyne, 'The Referendum on Communism,' *RWDSE* 11 (Dec. 1948), 8, 19.

¹⁵⁵ 'GEB Orders T-H Compliance; 4 Non-Complying Locals Suspended,' and 'President Wolchok's Letter to the Members of Locals 1-S, 2, 3 and 5,' *RWDSE* 11 (Sept. 1948), 3, 6. 'RWDSU Fights Communist Secession Move; Murray Blasts Disrupters As "Enemies"', *RWDSE* 11 (Oct. 1948), 3, 6.

¹⁵⁶ This event directly parallels the anti-Communism of the TGWU in Britain in 1949. Jim Phillips has argued that the TGWU's efforts to protect union democracy through anti-Communism paradoxically diminished democracy, leading to the desertion of 10,000 TGWU members to another union. Jim Phillips, 'Labour and the Cold War: The TGWU and the Politics of Anti-Communism, 1945-55,' *Labour History Review* 64 (Spring 1999).

¹⁵⁷ 'RWDSU Undergoes Reorganization,' *RWDSE* 12 (Jan. 1949), 3, 13.

¹⁵⁸ More specific summaries of various aspects of the events of 1948 and 1949 can be found in Baker and France, *Personnel Administration*, 102-105, 140-142. Harrington, *Retail Clerks*, 78-79. Estey, 'Patterns of Union Membership,' 559. Zundel, 'Conflict and Co-operation,' 304-305.

¹⁵⁹ Max Greenburg, 'The President's Column,' *RWDSE* 17 (April 1954), 2, 7, 8.

line with top-down union policy.¹⁶⁰ At the end of the day, the main effects of the events of 1948/49 for the RWDSU were membership loss, bad publicity for the retail unions in the national press, and a halt to the dramatic strides made in organisation of department stores between 1937 and 1947. Issues of anti-communism, the subversion of union democracy it reflected, the concentration of power it perpetuated, and the intimidation that accompanied it, were left almost entirely unaddressed.

USDAW and Apathy

For its part, USDAW escaped the more detrimental pitfalls of union democracy to which the RCIA and RWDSU had succumbed. USDAW was hardly immune from anti-Communism and the challenges it posed to union democracy. However, debates regarding the issue were much more open and two-sided than in the American unions.¹⁶¹ One *New Dawn* letter from the Secretary of the Wakefield branch in 1950 suggests that unofficial barriers may have been erected in some locals to bar Communists from holding union office, but there was never an official ban, as in other British trade unions, including the TGWU.¹⁶² More importantly, there was never any explicit mass exodus of members resulting from problems with democracy faced by USDAW or its member locals as there had been in the RCIA in 1937 and the RWDSU in 1948. But this is not to say that USDAW did not suffer its own challenges with regard to union democracy.

¹⁶⁰ There are again direct parallels with the nature and effects of anti-Communism in the TGWU in the late 1940s and early '50s: Jim Phillips, 'Democracy and Trade Unionism on the Docks,' in Campbell, Fishman, McIlroy (Eds), *British Trade Unions*, 293-310, esp. 294-302.

¹⁶¹ The *New Dawn* published unquestioningly the TUC's polemical 1948 statement on Communism in trade unions and passed a resolution supporting it at the 1949 ADM: 'T.U.C. Condemns Evil of Communism,' *ND* 2 (13 Nov. 1948), 549, 552. Resolution 35, 'Report of Proceedings at the Third Annual Delegate Meeting,' 1949, USDAW Library, Manchester. See also, 'The T.U.C. and Communism,' *ND* 9 (12 March 1955), 163. But the union also published letters from Communist members and debates among members, which the American shopworkers' unions never did. The following are a small sample: Letters to the Editor, *ND*, various issues, Spring 1948. 'The T.U.C. and Communism,' *ND* 2 (11 Dec. 1948), 623-624. 'Letters to the Editor,' *ND* 2 (25 Dec. 1948), 655. 'Communists,' *ND* 3 (5 March 1949), 159. 'Letters to the Editor,' *ND* 9 (9 April 1955), 255-256.

¹⁶² 'Butting-In,' *ND* (13 May 1950), 303-304. On the TGWU, Phillips, 'Labour and the Cold War'. In his study of anti-communism in the British trade unions, Richard Stevens makes mention of the anti-Communist 'Progressive Labour Group' formed in USDAW in the late 1940s, but I have not yet found more about them. Richard Stevens, 'Cold War Politics: Communism and Anti-Communism in the Trade Unions,' in Campbell, Fishman, McIlroy (Eds), *British Trade Unions*, 168-191, p. 171.

The potential problem caused by the consolidation of decision-making power in the national unions was made clear in USDAW when the union began national negotiations with the Co-operative retail societies through the Co-operative's Joint Trade Union Negotiating Committee in 1946. National negotiations meant that decisions regarding wages, hours, benefits, and some working conditions were removed from the context of local democracies and local negotiations. When the first national Co-operative rates were set in 1947, unofficial strikes broke out amongst London members dissatisfied with USDAW's new national wages scales compared to rates previously set at the regional level.¹⁶³ In May of the same year, an USDAW member wrote to the *New Dawn* attributing these and other unofficial strikes in British industry to neglect of the members by the 'officials of the Movement' who 'have probably never soiled their hands'. He accused those executives of being 'indifferent to the desires of the members' and warned that without correction the labour movement would become 'a bureaucratic monster that will crush the life out of militant trade unionists' and perpetuate member apathy.¹⁶⁴ His predictions would prove relevant to USDAW's post-war experience.

Over the post-war period, administrators of all of the major shopworkers' unions frequently complained of member apathy, but USDAW's executives even more so. This does not necessarily mean that apathy was worse in USDAW than in the American unions. However, without explicit crises in *fundamental loyalties* symbolised by the mass exodus of dissenting members, USDAW's executives were more explicitly concerned with the impact of apathy on lapses in individual membership and on the *functional loyalties* so necessary to the fulfilment of union goals. *New Dawn* editorials frequently bemoaned problems with apathy in local branches and the national union, evidenced by poor attendance at meetings, underutilisation of the union's education programmes, and a general lack of interest in union political activities. In 1955, nearly every divisional report

¹⁶³ Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 177-184.

¹⁶⁴ 'Letters to the Editor,' *ND* 1 (31 May 1947), 210. Another member accused the union of 'steamroller methods' in their attempts to build support for the National Agreement, 'The Wages Question,' *ND* 26 (20 April 1946), 152. The potential for the unofficial strike to highlight problems with both communication and union democracy was part of a broader trend in post-war British industrial relations. Richard Hyman, *Strikes* (Glasgow: William Collins Sons, 1972), 49-51.

highlighted apathy as the major problem facing USDAW locals.¹⁶⁵ In 1962, the ADM passed a resolution that explicitly correlated member apathy with professionalisation of representation in local branches:

This A.D.M. is concerned at the apparent deterioration of Union branch life and activity, and deplors the widespread practice of staffing branches with full-time officials. It urges the Executive Council to accelerate the appointment of the maximum number of Area Organisers and Collector-Canvassers as increased income makes this possible.¹⁶⁶

Contradictorily, this resolution proposed that the answer to member apathy resulting from bureaucratisation of union activities was to hire more officials and further extend union bureaucracy from the top down.

Apathy resulting from growth of national bureaucracy in USDAW was not new to the post-war period. Member apathy stalled the amalgamation of NUDAW and NAUSA&C—arguably the most strategically important event for the British shopworkers' unions in the twentieth century. Beginning in 1926, proposals for amalgamation failed repeatedly in the inter-war years as a result of the fact that less than 50 per cent of members returned their voting cards. Even when these conditions were finally met in 1946, only 63 per cent of NUDAW members and 68 per cent of NAUSA&C members participated in the crucial referendum vote.¹⁶⁷

Low participation in the union's basic democratic institutions continued through the post-war years. During the 1950s and '60s, the national union routinely reported that at least 20 per cent of the membership had failed to send representatives to the Annual Delegate Meeting where national policy was determined.¹⁶⁸ Another indication of apathy was the lack of vigour in union elections. In 1969, when 96 Executive and Divisional Council seats were open, only 132 people stood for election.¹⁶⁹ In USDAW, member apathy and less than full use of the union's democratic systems seemed part of a problematic cycle; by concentrating power into the hands of a few, whether at the local or national level,

¹⁶⁵ 'The Struggle Against Inertia,' *ND* 23 (14 Aug. 1943), 257. Frances Dean, 'The Union and its Problems,' *ND* 1 (15 Nov. 1947), 443, 454. 'Agenda for Blackpool,' *ND* 5 (17 March 1951), 161. 'The Long Road,' *ND* 9 (24 Sept. 1955), 593. M. D. Chant, 'Membership Obligation Discussed by South-West Divisional Conference,' *ND* 9 (26 March 1955), 171, 181.

¹⁶⁶ 'Decisions of the A.D.M.,' *ND* 16 (12 May 1962), 295-298.

¹⁶⁷ Richardson, *A Union of Many Trades*, 129-132, 166-176.

¹⁶⁸ 'Numbers of members represented' in the records of the ADM, reported annually in the *ND*.

¹⁶⁹ And 13 of those stood for more than one seat. 'Union Elections, 1969,' *ND* 23 (April 1969), 99-100.

apathy and the failures in *functional loyalty* it represented both reflected and perpetuated problems with union democracy.

Political Affiliation

For all of the major shopworkers' unions, members' frustrations with the concentration of power in their unions were most clearly articulated with regard to the issue of political affiliation. Although national and international political issues were frequently the subject of resolutions at annual delegate meetings and conventions, many policy decisions for the national unions were made by each union's Executive Councils, usually in line with AFL, CIO or TUC policy. While union executives might have considered top-down political affiliation a means for protecting the interests of all workers including the unorganised,¹⁷⁰ many union members expressed resentment toward union leaders when they went beyond their mandate as elected union representatives.

In 1950 the *New Dawn* published several letters from members protesting against what one USDAW branch secretary called a 'gross betrayal and undemocratic act' when the union's Executive Council went on record in support of the TUC's policy on wage restraint without explicit support from the membership.¹⁷¹ In fact, from the end of the Second World War, USDAW's members had made it clear through *New Dawn* letters and ADM debates that they supported wages policies only if they guaranteed higher wages, rather than wage restraint.¹⁷² Even beyond the fundamental issue of wages, USDAW's close alliance with the Labour Party and devotion to Labour policy was a frequent topic of concern and comment, not only for Communist members from the left, but also vocal Tory members from the right. Concerned with political in-fighting in the union, one Tory member argued in 1962 that:

The best solution to this would be non-political unions; then a man could have responsibilities as a member of his trade union which would be non-party and could participate as an active member of a political party outside his Trade Union! This move would genuinely and without

¹⁷⁰ Charles Boyd, (Local 1-S PAC chairman), 'Keep Out of Politics?' *LI-SN* 6 (1 Oct. 1954), 4.

¹⁷¹ 'Trade Union Wages Policy,' *ND* 4 (19 Feb. 1950), 126-128. 'The A.D.M. and Wages Policy,' *ND* 4 (29 April 1950), 256-259. USDAW's members were not the only trade unionists to contest the TUC's position: Wrigley, *British Trade Unions*, 65.

¹⁷² 'Government Wages Policy: What Our Readers Think,' *ND* 26 (24 Aug. 1946), 314-315, and 'Letters to the Editor,' *ND*, Summer 1946. Proceedings of the Annual Delegate Meetings for 1946, 1948, 1950, USDAW Library.

distinction of party, better serve the industrial interests of its members and the country.¹⁷³

He was not alone, as the conflict over USDAW's Labour Party loyalties continually resurfaced in the post-war years.¹⁷⁴ However, this member's comments clearly demonstrated that *fundamental* and *functional loyalties* to the union could exist independent of, even in contradiction to, union *ideological loyalties*.

In America, it is significant that the RCIA's Active Ballot Clubs were organised on a local as well as national basis, with the RCIA President as their head. Even though these clubs participated in local politics, on the national level, the President was arguably chief lobbyist and political activist. There is little evidence as to members' reactions to the Active Ballot Clubs and the top-down dissemination of political policy through the clubs. However, the 1969 RCIA Local 1401 survey showed that only 28 per cent of department and variety store members approved of their union's participation in politics, while 50 per cent explicitly disapproved. Perhaps just as problematic from the union's perspective, the remainder apathetically marked 'Don't care'.¹⁷⁵ The leaders of Macy's Local 1-S also received critical feedback from their members, first regarding their firm stand against anti-Communism, and later with regard to the fact that they were involved in politics at all. One correspondent, frustrated with the union's politics in 1954 wrote, 'When it comes to politics we union members are intelligent enough to judge by ourselves, without your advice. So mind your business and serve us.'¹⁷⁶

This frustrated Local 1-S member's statement goes to the heart of the issue: what Jim Phillips has described as 'conflicting conceptions of democracy'.¹⁷⁷ Like the dockworkers' unions of Phillips's study, the shopworkers' unions in Britain and America at mid-century saw conflict between the direct representational democracy most members expected of their unions, and

¹⁷³ 'An Advocate of Non-Political Unions,' *ND* 16 (10 Nov. 1962), 736.

¹⁷⁴ 'Readers' Letters,' *ND* 2 (11 Dec. 1948), 623-624. 'Trade Unionism and Politics,' *ND* 5 (14 April 1951), 255-256. 'Letters to the Editor,' *ND* 11 (2 Nov. 1957), 703; 11 (16 Nov. 1957), 736; 11 (14 Dec. 1957), 800. 'Candidates, Parties and Policies,' *ND* 16 (24 Nov. 1962), 762-768.

'Toryism and Trade Unionism,' *ND* 16 (22 Dec. 1962), 832.

¹⁷⁵ See responses to Question 31, Union Opinion Questionnaires.

¹⁷⁶ 'Protest' and 'A Great Patriot', *LI-SN* 5 (15 March 1954), 4. 'Letters to the Editor,' *LI-SN* 1 (Jan. 1950), 3.

¹⁷⁷ Phillips, 'Democracy and Trade Unionism,' 293.

the paternalist, ideological democracy union leaders pursued through political affiliation, activism and anti-Communism.

Over the course of the post-war period, the leaders of the major shopworkers' unions helped to set constitutional and administrative policies that would consolidate power in their national unions for two purposes: to facilitate national bargaining power with retail employers, labour federations and affiliated political parties; and to promote political and economic democracy between retail labour and retail business on a national scale. In the meantime, however, most union members sought a more tangible democracy which would protect avenues for voice—and dissent—and provide the contractual instrumentalist gains promised them in union recruitment drives. The aim of this section has been to show that when the unions failed to live up to their own expectations of democracy, as in the RCIA in 1937 and 1968, the RWDSU in 1948, and USDAW (on a less dramatic scale) from the 1940s through the '60s, *fundamental* and *functional loyalties* were put at risk.

Conclusion

Historians have most commonly attributed the challenges of trade unionism in the private service sector to the dominance of women, part-time and 'white collar' workers employed in service trades. The case of British and American retail unions suggests that, overall, these factors were somewhat influential in department and variety stores where the majority of employees were women or part-time workers. However, the unions were actually increasingly successful in their efforts to recruit *fundamental* union loyalties from women and part-time employees. It was only when gender and part-time job status were compounded with other factors, such as age and high labour turnover, that these characteristics became less readily surmountable obstacles for the retail unions.

Low degrees of *fundamental loyalty* to the shopworkers' unions in both Britain and America can be more fully explained by analysis of the factors that were, in combination, particular to the retail trades: dispersion of potential membership in millions of small shops; the increasingly common national chain store corporate structure; and high labour turnover. The three major unions' different success rates with regard to *fundamental loyalties* in department and variety stores can be explained in large part by the rate at which each union made

the transition from craft to industrial organising technique, and by international differences in wage and hour bargaining.

Attention to gender and job status is much more useful when explaining failures of *functional loyalty* in the shopworkers' unions. Analysis of the experiences of women and part-time workers in all three of the major unions suggests that these members' *functional loyalties* were undermined by lack of participation in the unions' democratic systems which systematically circumscribed their opportunities for voice. It is difficult to conclude whether this lack of participation resulted from sociological factors unique to women and part-time workers, or from the unions' tendencies to favour the interests of men and full-time members in bargaining activities. However, the problems with union democracy symbolised by the limited involvement of women and part-time members in the unions' representative systems exposed deeper crises with union democracy. Problems with democracy prompted by subordination of dissent and centralisation of decision-making power within the unions accounted, more than any other single factor, for the dramatic shifts in union loyalty in the RCIA in 1937 and the RWDSU in 1948, and for long-term problems with apathy in both the British and American unions.

In 1944, J. T. Price, head of USDAW's Legal Department, warned that the trade union was at risk of becoming just another institutional presence in workers' lives rather than their own democratic organisation. He argued that:

The most disturbing thing is that increasing efficiency of the trade union machine is so often accompanied by the increasing apathy of trade union members. The union, like the Church, the State, the law, becomes a semi-mystical entity expected to produce certain results by putting prayers or pennies into a slot and turning a handle by proxy. Democratic institutions, however perfect on paper, simply will not work unless those individuals they comprise and serve take an intelligent, active part in their affairs.¹⁷⁸

The constancy of members' instrumentalist approaches to unionism in both Britain and America demonstrated the validity of Price's fears. Twenty years later and an ocean away, a Macy's Local 1-S member, frustrated by having to take out health insurance through the union, accused the local of having 'taken over ill-

¹⁷⁸ J. T. Price, 'A Few Thoughts on Machinery: Is Efficiency the Last Word?' *ND* 24 (23 Sept. 1944), 311.

management's roll as "the boss".¹⁷⁹ To many retail union members, the union had become simply another bureaucratic presence in their lives.

It is virtually impossible to know the extent to which ideological union education programmes informed members' choices at the ballot box or changed the way members talked about their unions in public. Indeed, *ideological loyalties* are virtually impossible to measure. However, the case of the British and American shopworkers' unions suggests that the final eclipse of the social democratic ideal in the 1980s was more than just a matter of public frustration with union militancy in Britain or the overwhelming power of business activists in America. When the unions failed to make their own visions of economic and political democracy viable—when union leaders became comparatively wealthy, decision-making executives in their own right,¹⁸⁰ and trade unions became instrumentalist institutions for the provision of wages and benefits rather than vibrant grassroots democratic organisations—the choice was not between capitalism and socialism or even necessarily between economic stratification and economic democracy, but for the better of two institutional bureaucracies.

¹⁷⁹ 'Anti-Union,' *LI-SN* 9 (1 March 1963), 3.

¹⁸⁰ James Suffridge's salary as RCIA President in 1962 was \$50,000, over 14 times the average American non-supervisory retail employee's annual earnings of \$3429. 'Annual Report,' *RCA* 65 (July 1962), 9-15. *Monthly Labor Review* 87 (1964), 226-237.

Conclusion

In the twenty-first century, British and American citizens daily face a plethora of sometimes conflicting, sometimes convergent pleas for their loyalty from employers, trade unions, family members, churches, political parties, community organisations, activist groups and so on. With an interest in understanding the complexities of such loyalties in historical and contemporary contexts, the first aim of this thesis has been to delineate a theoretical model of loyalty, based on historical and sociological studies, that can help to explain when and why individuals or institutions have successfully solicited loyalty from others. The main principle of this model is that there are important distinctions to be made between *fundamental loyalties* to the rules of belonging in a certain group, *functional loyalties* to the goals of that group, and *ideological loyalties* to that group's worldviews. These distinctions become particularly important when considering the ways each of these loyalties has been solicited, and the purpose each of these loyalties has served in different institutional contexts. Elaborating on that basic premise, this study has examined the usefulness of several different organisational techniques for soliciting and maintaining loyalties over time, including penalties for exit, protection of voice, the cultivation of an ethic of reciprocity, the subordination of rival loyalties, and the construction of a culture of belonging through nurturance of interpersonal loyalties.

The most important qualification to be made with regard to the model of loyalty put forward in the introduction to this thesis is that loyalty is neither a static concept nor reality. Rather, *fundamental*, *functional*, and *ideological loyalties* have always been a product of the historical context in which they were solicited, constructed and negotiated, and can therefore only be discussed with continual reference to the historical contemporaneity of political, economic, social and cultural change and continuity. The second aim of this thesis then, has been to examine the cultivation of various loyalties among individuals in a specific, if densely populated social group—British and American department and variety store workers, in a specific historical period—from the late 1930s through the early 1970s.

I have focused on loyalties to employer and union, with reference to family loyalties, gender, class and racial identities in order to address the common

historiographical assumption that employee or union loyalties were either present or absent at any given time as a result of employer- or union-initiated activities. I have argued that, in fact, some types of loyalty were present for some individuals while other forms were absent, and that loyalty was not simply an end product of employer or union activities, but a *process* negotiated by shopworkers themselves. Following on from Gerald Zahavi's work, a major premise of this analysis has been that shopworkers and union members exercised agency in the process of loyalty formation.¹ The most loyal employees and trade unionists were not dupes of executive propaganda; neither were the least loyal shopworkers heroically independent. Rather, each retail worker and trade union member's process of negotiating loyalty was dependent on a multiplicity of factors, which did include employers' and unions' ability to meet workers' instrumentalist demands and live up to their own reciprocal bargains, but also included matters of individual concern, such as family responsibilities. The extent of department and variety store employers' and trade unions' vulnerability to the agency exercised by shopworkers is most clear with regard to labour turnover and the pressures it put on both stores and unions. It was in part the possibility that employees would exercise agency by quitting, by rudely dismissing a customer, or by joining a trade union that kept employers diligently searching for new and better methods of soliciting loyalty. Similarly, unions remained vulnerable to the member who crossed a picket line, angered customers or voted in support of pro-business agendas. At mid-century, the quest for loyalty on the part of stores and unions was not a straightforward matter of the powerful exploiting the powerless then. As proven by the trade unions where power became increasingly concentrated in the post-war years, loyalty became less necessary the more powerful and invulnerable organisational leaders became. (See Figure C.1.)

By applying the tripartite model of loyalty, set out in the Introduction, to the study of loyalty in British and American retail institutions and trade unions at mid-century, a number of conclusions can be made which together paint a complex picture of employee and union loyalties. The first set of conclusions have to do with the interrelatedness of employer and union loyalties. Historians

¹ Gerald Zahavi, 'Negotiated Loyalty: Welfare Capitalism and the Shoeworkers of Endicott Johnson, 1920-1940,' *Journal of American History* 70 (Dec. 1983), 602-620; and *Workers*,

Figure C.1. Negotiated loyalty



Retail employers and unions commonly portrayed themselves as vulnerable to the agency exercised by instrumentalist, self-centred shopworkers. More often than not these shopworkers were represented as attractive young women.

See also Figures 1.1 and 1.2.

The Retail, Wholesale & Department Store Employee 11 (July 1948), 8.

of British and American industrial relations have frequently assumed that loyalties to employer and union were necessarily at odds—that employers cultivated employee loyalties for the explicit purpose of undermining loyalty to unions, and that unions cultivated loyalty to win employee support for claims against employers. While this may have been the case in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in British and American retail in the mid-twentieth century, the situation was much more complex.

There was a certain degree of explicit anti-unionism in retail employers' efforts to solicit employee loyalties, particularly in America just after the surge in retail union membership in the late 1930s. And the psychological impact on retail executives of the precedent set by fully unionised stores such as Macy's should not be underestimated no matter how strong the odds against unionisation in most department and variety stores actually were. However, the overt and covert anti-unionism evident in retail employers' efforts to solicit *ideological loyalties* from their employees was arguably just as much about maintaining good public relations and advancing a politico-economic ideology of voluntarism as it was about inhibiting unionisation. Indeed, *fundamental*, *functional* and *ideological* employee loyalties were important to British and American department and variety store executives for many purposes other than subverting trade unions, including stemming the tide of labour turnover, improving retail productivity, soliciting and maintaining customer loyalties, and proving the viability of various models of economic democracy during the Cold War.

The same was true of the shopworkers' unions. Although each of the major unions, the RCIA, the RWDSU, and USDAW engaged in a certain degree of rhetorical employer-bashing during particularly antagonistic periods of industrial action, the unions were fully aware that loyalties to the union were inherently dependent on their members' *fundamental* and often *functional loyalties* to employers. After all, if the unions succeeded in convincing members that an employer was irredeemably unjust, there was little to stop a largely unskilled membership base from leaving that employer, and in turn the union, for other employment. As with retail employers, the British and American shopworkers' unions depended on their members' loyalties for much more than

Managers, and Welfare Capitalism: The Shoeworkers and Tanners of Endicott Johnson, 1890-1950 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

supporting the occasional industrial action. Union members' *functional loyalties* were important for recruiting new members, improving public relations, and lobbying politicians for regulation of shop working conditions. *Ideological loyalties* to the union were important for those shopworkers willing to sell the union agenda—economic democracy in America and socialism in Britain—to family, friends and customers.

One of the main conclusions to be drawn from this study then, is that employee and union member loyalties served many purposes, and that these loyalties were not necessarily at odds. In many ways, *fundamental* and *functional loyalties* to employer and union were often convergent, as when both institutions sought to lower labour turnover and to professionalise the trade. Even *ideological loyalties* overlapped to the extent that both employers and unions sought to rule out the Communist possibility in America and Britain. Loyalties to employer and union were only directly at odds in the political realm and during periods of intense industrial action. However, even at these times retail employers and unions had in common their efforts to call on the *functional* and *ideological loyalties* of shopworkers to sell their organisational agendas to the economically and politically powerful middle classes as customers.

These findings suggest that the shared post-war emphasis on productivity was not the only way in which British and American employers and trade unions collaborated.² Periods of adversarial and confrontational exchange between employers and unions have attracted a great degree of historical attention from labour historians, in part because trade unions and employers highlighted these moments as key points on their own organisational timelines, and because such confrontations undoubtedly helped to shape the course of labour history. However, this study suggests that, at least in the retail trades, such events were rare and tended to overshadow the fact that there was a clear degree of mutual interest between institutions of capital and labour, not only in leadership styles but in trade-specific organisational goals as well. Further investigation into this

² On post-war productivity negotiations in Europe including Britain, see Joseph Melling and Alan McKinlay (Eds.), *Management, Labour and Industrial Politics in Modern Europe: The Quest for Productivity Growth During the Twentieth Century* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1996). Alan McKinlay and Joseph Melling, 'The Shop Floor Politics of Productivity: Work, Power and Authority Relations in British Engineering, c. 1945-57,' in Alan Campbell, Nina Fishman, John McIlroy (Eds.), *British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics: The Post-war Compromise, 1945-64*, Vol. 1 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 222-241.

shared ground in other trades might help to more fully explain employee disillusionment with trade unions and places of employment as bureaucratic institutions in the post-war years.

The study of employee and union loyalties in the retail trades helps to demonstrate some of the necessary pre-conditions of loyalty for shopworkers in the mid-twentieth century. For both employers and unions, *fundamental loyalties* relied to a great extent on the degree to which employee/members' instrumentalist demands for better wages, fringe benefits or working conditions were met. Importantly, the means by which employers and unions met employees' instrumentalist demands helped to reinforce *fundamental loyalties*. By increasing vacation provisions, discount privileges and pensions with length of tenure, employers and unions ensured that they increased the *fundamental loyalties* of at least some employees by creating penalties for exit—leaving store employment meant losing personal security that could only be built up over time. Although successful in using benefits to solicit *fundamental loyalties* in some instances, both employers and unions were continually disappointed that attempts to meet employees' instrumentalist needs rarely invoked an ethic of reciprocity that translated into *functional loyalty*.

In the quest for *fundamental loyalties*, stores and unions also tried to subordinate rival loyalties to family, and to subordinate employees' class identities to store goals. Store executives and union leaders continually promised shopworkers that they could find security for their families and middle-class affluence through loyalty to employer, union or both. It was in part the process of subordinating shopworkers' family loyalties and identities to employer or union loyalties that helped to create penalties for exit and reinforce *fundamental loyalties* in particular. The importance of penalties for exit cannot be overestimated, given that high labour turnover continually undermined both employer and union activities in the retail trades where exit was just too easy for a largely unskilled, low-wage labour force.

Functional loyalties to employer and union depended on the construction of a community imbued with common goals through which shopworkers could derive meaning and a sense of belonging. Both employers and unions used social activities to help foster the interpersonal loyalties among employees and members that focused around loyalties to either store or union. As evidenced by the staff

plays that humorously enacted better selling techniques in department stores, or the political action clubs and conferences that educated union members in the political agendas of their unions, well-organised social activities offered retail executives and union leaders the opportunity to inculcate participants with the information and values necessary to the cultivation of *functional loyalties*. At the heart of the store community were always the demands of the store as a business venture, just as the activities of union communities helped in both explicit and implicit ways to further union agendas.

Another, and perhaps more important precondition for *functional loyalties* in both stores and unions was the existence and protection of avenues for the expression of employee/member voice. A plethora of employee attitude surveys in British and American retail from the late 1930s brought employers to this awareness, resulting in more executive attention to improvement of both upward and downward communication. The shopworkers' unions appear to have been less explicitly aware of the importance of voice at mid-century when the democratic structures of trade unionism that provided opportunities for expression of voice were endangered by concentration of power in the unions. The problem for both stores and unions was that when voice was unaccompanied by power, shopworkers' *fundamental* and *functional loyalties* were tested, often to breaking point. The Co-operative movement realised this when it consistently refused at the national level to grant employees the same democratic rights to representation on management committees that consumer members received, and retail societies experienced persistent conflict with USDAW as a result. The John Lewis Partnership realised this when Partners complained that their powers in the Partnership were only marginally different from those of employees in other businesses, and when low employee identification with Partnership principles persisted.³ The RCIA belatedly realised the importance of marrying voice with power when it lost the heart of its membership to internal divisions in 1938, and the RWDSU suffered similar consequences as a result of its internal political struggles in the late 1940s. The conclusion to be drawn here is that voice can be

³ On low identification with Partnership principles, see Allan Flanders, Ruth Pomeranz, and Joan Woodward, *Experiment in Industrial Democracy: A Study of the John Lewis Partnership* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1968), 114, 197-202.

an insufficient precondition for *functional loyalty* when it is frustrated by lack of operational democratic processes of power-sharing.

The quest for *ideological loyalties* on the part of both stores and unions intersected in many ways with the development of other loyalties. *Ideological loyalties* were important to both stores and unions in their own right, but also to help shopworkers' find meaning in their work or in their union membership to the point of developing *functional loyalties*. The extent to which either stores or unions succeeded in soliciting *ideological loyalties* from shopworkers is difficult to determine, given the general lack of available evidence. However, the evidence presented in earlier chapters regarding such loyalties lends itself to two conclusions.

The first conclusion is that both stores and unions often failed to implement their ideological agendas in their own institutions, which could only have inhibited development of employee or union member sympathy with those agendas. Without reasonable wage rates in American department and variety stores, very few retail employees could realise the 'self-made man' ideal so crucial to the overriding ethic of free enterprise. Without democracy for employees in most Co-operative retail societies, the ethic of democratic control of business through co-operation remained an elusive one for most Co-operative workers. Without the right to vote on shares or significantly influence company decisions in the John Lewis Partnership, employees were not easily convinced that they were Partners in a producer co-operative. Without secure routes for freedom of expression, freedom from intimidation, and freedom to control their local unions, retail trade unionists were not able to realise fully all that the ideology of economic democracy promised.

The second conclusion with regard to *ideological loyalties* is that once deployed, such loyalties were no longer under the control of store or trade union leaders. When Partners criticised the Partnership's leaders, they often used the values and discourses of producer co-operation provided by John Spedan Lewis himself to do so. When NUDAW and later USDAW accused the Co-operative movement of failing to live up to its own democratic ideals, they continually referred to the Co-operative movement's own ideological roots. Similarly, when the RWDSU's leadership led dissidents out of the RCIA in 1938, they did so claiming that they could better fulfil the aims of economic democracy valued in

the American labour movement. In fact, the only concrete evidence of stores' and unions' success in soliciting *ideological loyalties* from shopworkers was provided in instances where employees or trade unionists displayed those loyalties while criticising their employers or unions.

The final aim of this thesis has been to explain general developments in department and variety store managerial style and in trade union methods of recruitment and political activity in the mid-twentieth century. The truism that the more things change the more things remain the same can be applied to the state of retail business and trade union styles today. Without dismissing important changes that have occurred since the 1970s—including the computer revolution, Thatcherism, Reaganism, and the close of the Cold War—it is interesting to note the extent to which many stores and retail unions grapple with the same problems today that they did fifty years ago.

The processes that were changing the British and American retail sectors in the mid-twentieth century remain influential. The extension of the chain store model of corporate governance has continued to the point that Marshall Field's is now owned by Target, one of America's largest chain store retailers, and the John Lewis Partnership is no longer a loose confederation of unique department stores but a chain opening its own standardised stores. Rationalisation has also continued, not only in backroom offices where clerks have been replaced by computers, but on the shop floor, where Marks & Spencer's introduced in 2002 a self check-out till in selected grocery departments.⁴ Yet even in this context of modernisation and rationalisation, paternalism remains a defining feature of many retail business, not least at Wal-Mart, which is famed for its strong company culture revolving around the late Sam Walton.⁵ Even into the 1990s Lord Marcus Sieff of Marks & Spencer's remained a major proponent of British human relations programmes that combined traditional paternalist provisions like staff canteens and in-house medical care with a 'new managerial style' emphasis on

⁴ A trend which originated in American grocery stores and has spread to Tesco's and Safeway supermarkets in the UK. 'Marks & Spencer Trials NCR Self-Checkout Tills,' Marks & Spencer Corporate Press Office, 12 Sept. 2002, <<http://www2.marksandspencer.com/thecompany/printscript/printpage.asp>> (24 Oct. 2003).

⁵ Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: Undercover in Low-wage USA* (London: Granta Books, 2002), 121-191. Bob Ortega, *In Sam We Trust: The Untold Story of Sam Walton and How Wal-Mart is Devouring the World* (London: Kogan Page, 1999).

training and development of employee relations conducive to expression of voice.⁶

It is this mix of traditional methods of labour management with modernisation, professionalisation, standardisation and rationalisation of corporate structures and cultures that continues to define British and American retail practice at present. As at mid-century, shopworkers' responses to this diverse network of retail managerial styles are neither singular nor consistent. In April 2002, the *John Lewis Partnership Gazette* published one anonymous letter from a Partner calling for an end to subsidies for cultural activities such as football, sailing and education, and another letter from a Saturday part-time Partner calling for *more* social events to be planned through the Partnership.⁷ Clearly the negotiation of loyalty between employee and firm remains one largely negotiated on an individual basis for individual reasons.

For the shopworkers' unions, the challenge of recruiting members in department and variety stores remains more of a challenge than ever. Retail unions in both America and Britain remain dominated by grocery store employees. Tesco's supermarket staff alone account for 30 per cent of USDAW's membership.⁸ However, the unions are always looking to expand into the vast potential membership field provided by dry goods stores. In America the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), which includes the former RCIA and RWDSU as well as many other retail unions, is in a constant battle to organise Wal-Mart discount stores that threaten union gains by paying low wages and offering few benefits for employees. For example, UFCW Local 1546 in Chicago has recently engaged in a sustained campaign to organise local Wal-Mart stores through boycott methods the RCIA worked toward enhancing in the 1950s.⁹ In Britain USDAW is continually pushing at the boundaries of its grocery-dominated membership to recruit in the largely un-unionised dry goods sector. In early 2003, USDAW made progress at Harrods when owner Mohamed Al Fayed agreed to

⁶ Lord Marcus Sieff, *Marcus Sieff on Management: The Marks & Spencer Way* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1990), 55-91, 148-150.

⁷ 'Readers' Letters,' *GJLP* 84 (13 April 2002), 267, 269.

⁸ 'Harrods Opens its Doors to Usdaw,' *Arena* (Sept.-Oct. 2002), 18.

⁹ 'Wal-Mart Not Worth the Trip,' *State of the Union 2* (Jan.-Feb. 2003), 4. 'Wal-Mart Workers Deserve a Union Voice'; 'Person to Person: Union Members Visit with Wal-Mart Workers,' *State of the Union 2* (March-April 2003), 2-3. On Wal-Mart working conditions, see Naomi Klein, *No Logo* (London: Flamingo, 2001), 240-241, 243. Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, 121-191. Ortega, *In Sam We Trust*.

talks regarding a union-company partnership deal which could provide the potential for union representation in one of Britain's most traditional department stores.¹⁰

If the history of retail union organisation is any indication, the success of the UFCW's and USDAW's recruitment campaigns in department, variety and discount stores will depend largely on their ability to fulfil shopworkers' instrumentalist demands for better wages and better benefits store by store, city by city. But recruitment will also depend on the unions' ability to resolve the key problem of labour turnover, in part with better wages and benefits, and in part by addressing the trend of deskilling in retail by opening up new potential for professionalisation and promotion that may attract more permanent employees. For USDAW and the UFCW, these goals depend as much on political as industrial action at the local, regional and national levels. And the routes of political action remain those initiated or developed in the early post-war years: Active Ballot Clubs in the UFCW and a close alliance with the Labour Party for USDAW.¹¹ If the twenty-first century is to be marked by 'the Wal-Marting of America'—and of Britain, given Asda's rise—with even further development of part-time, low-wage, low-benefit employment in massive international chains, then the history of industrial relations and trade union successes and failures in the retail trades hold important lessons for today's labour movements.¹²

Despite persistent efforts on the part of stores and unions to recruit shopworkers' loyalties, one of the major preconditions of those loyalties has yet to be secured on a national basis. In Britain and America retail employees remain among the lowest-paid workers in the labour market. On average in America in 2002 retail workers made 66 per cent of the hourly wage earned by manufacturing workers, and only 68 per cent of the average hourly wage for all private trade non-supervisory workers.¹³ The sustained under-valuation of shop floor labour over

¹⁰ 'Harrods Opens its Doors,' 18.

¹¹ 'Goal: Strengthening Our Power in Politics' and accompanying columns, *State of the Union*, 2 (March-April 2003), 6. 'Workers Deserve Fairness and Equality,' and 'Making Work Pay,' *Arena* (Sept.-Oct. 2002), 14-15, 26.

¹² Quote from Kelly Candaele and Peter Dreier, 'A Watershed Strike,' *The Nation* (23 Oct. 2003), <<http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20031110&s=drier>> (29 Oct. 2003).

¹³ 'Earnings by Industry,' Wages, Earnings & Benefits, Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor, <http://data.bls.gov/cgi_bin/surveymost?ee> (18 Feb. 2003). Such statistics are not available for Britain, where statistics are only available for full-time employees (not adequate because of the large number of part-time employees in retail); where managerial and non-managerial employees have been combined in statistical records; and where retail employees have

the course of the post-war period stands in direct contradiction to the rising value of the shop front in contemporary political and cultural economics.¹⁴ Even as the American and British administrations privilege shopping as the road to economic recovery and national pre-eminence, the shopworker who facilitates national consumption remains at the bottom rungs of both countries' socio-economic structures.

been grouped together with wholesale and motor vehicle repair workers. See, for example, 'New Earnings Survey,' *Labour Market Trends* 111 (September 2003).

¹⁴ On the increasing importance of consumption in the post-war years, see Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003). Matthew Hilton, *Consumerism in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Search for a Historical Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003).

Appendix

Definitions of Retail Establishments

Throughout this study, I have used many retail business terms, most commonly 'department store' and 'variety store'. At mid-century, as today, there was never just one definition on which all retailers, trade unions and government statisticians could agree. The definitions offered here provide more specific details and boundaries than offered in the Introduction, but also demonstrate the difficulty of defining these common terms in the retail trades, and the difficulty of deciding in which category each retail company belonged at any one time.

Department Stores

1. UK Department of Trade, *Census of Distribution and Other Services, 1950, Retail Trade Short Report* (London: HMSO, 1952), 22.

'Large shops with annual sales exceeding £100,000 and with sales greater than £5,000 in each of several commodity groups, one of which is clothing.

'Shops classified under this heading usually sell women's clothing, household textiles and soft furnishings, furniture and domestic hardware and they may sell men's wear, food and other items.

'A few shops with annual sales of less than £100,000 are included here in view of their similarity to the shops typical of this group.'

2. James B. Jefferys, *Retail Trading in Britain, 1850-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1954), 465.

'A department store is defined as a large store selling under one roof, but in physically separate departments, four or more different classes of consumer goods one of which is women's and girl's clothing. In some instances a large number of department stores are controlled by one firm but the individual stores making up the group usually trade as autonomous units. These stores therefore have not been classed as the branches of a multiple shop organization.'

3. U.S. Census of Business, 1958. Quoted in Malcolm P. McNair, Eleanor G. May, *The American Department Store, 1920-1960* (Boston: Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration, 1963), 11.

‘Establishments normally employing 25 or more people and engaged in selling some items in each of the following lines of merchandise:

1. Furniture, home furnishings, appliances, radio and TV sets.
2. A general line of apparel for the family.
3. Household linen and dry goods.

‘An establishment with total sales of less than \$5,000,000, in which sales of any one of these groupings is greater than 80% of total sales, is not classified as a department store.

‘An establishment with total sales of \$5,000,000 or more is classified as a department store even if sales of one of the groups described above is more than 80% of total sales, provided that the combined sales of the other two groups is \$500,000 or more. Relatively few stores are included in this classification as a result of this special rule and most of those which are would otherwise have been classified in the apparel group.’

4. ‘Traditional department store’ as differentiated from variety and discount store chains, many of which had grown by mid-century to technically meet the U.S. Census of Business definition above without being commonly recognised as department stores. Malcolm P. McNair and Eleanor G. May, *American Department Store*, 11.

‘Beyond meeting the requirements of the Department of Commerce definition, it is typically a store offering considerable service to customers, it has a commodity-departmental form of organization for buying and selling, it centralizes many of the other management functions for its selling departments, it may be independently owned or it may be chain-owned, it may or may not be a member of a voluntary group. Originally in most instances a single store, it may now have from one to ten or more branches. To describe such a store as being of the type commonly belonging to the National Retail Merchants Association conveys a certain picture, but strict accuracy requires the recognition that Sears Roebuck, Montgomery Ward, J. C. Penney, J. J. Newberry, F. W. Woolworth, and Korvette are all members

of the NRMA, as are a substantial number of specialty apparel stores that do not qualify as department stores under the Department of Commerce Definition.’

Variety Stores

1. UK Department of Trade, *Census of Distribution and Other Services, 1950, Retail Trade Short Report* (London: HMSO, 1952), 22.

‘Shops describing themselves as “variety” or “bazaar” stores and selling a wide range of goods.

‘The goods are usually displayed in trays or racks for selection by the customers.’

2. James B. Jefferys, *Retail Trading in Britain, 1850-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1954), 466.

‘A variety chain store is defined as a multiple shop retailer with 10 or more branches each of which sells a wide variety of low-priced articles under one roof, usually without any clear division between different sections selling different goods. The articles sold are usually displayed on open counters or racks.’

3. Variety stores as bazaar stores. William B. Neville, *Bazaar Trading: A Treatise on the Subject, Specially Written for the Co-operative Movement* (Manchester: Co-operative Union, c. 1935), p. 7, CA.

‘Bazaar stores do not departmentalise their displays; they intermingle articles with an utter disregard for any preconceived notions of what might be proper to the occasion. Baked beans and bath salts will be found on the same counter; a display of cooked meats will be sandwiched between paints and powders; tooth paste and tooth brushes are laid out in close proximity to the snack bar. According to co-operative principles of departmentalisation bazaar stores generally present an incongruous conglomeration of badly arranged merchandise.’

Co-operative Society

1. Jefferys, *Retail Trading in Britain, 1850-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1954), 465.

‘A Co-operative Society is defined as a Co-operative retailing organization trading on Co-operative principles, affiliated to the national Co-operative movement and registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts. Many of the Co-operative Retail Societies control a number of separate branch shops and therefore their organizational framework is somewhat similar to that of multiple shop organisations. There are however many differences between the two types of organization in other respects, the chief ones being the Co-operative practice of democratic control by the members and the payment of a dividend on purchases.’

Multiple shops

1. Jefferys, *Retail Trading in Britain, 1850-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1954), 465.

‘A multiple shop organization is defined as a firm, other than a Co-operative Society, possessing 10 or more retail establishments. A firm controlling 10 or more department stores is not, however, classified as a multiple shop retailer but as a department store The definition adopted . . . has some economic justification in that in most trades significant economies of scale were not present until a firm operated from at least 10 branches

‘In determining the number of branches of individual multiple shop firms, the main consideration was financial control This principle of financial control has been used in all instances including those where the subsidiary firms trade under entirely different names and the connexion with the parent firm may not be known generally.’

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